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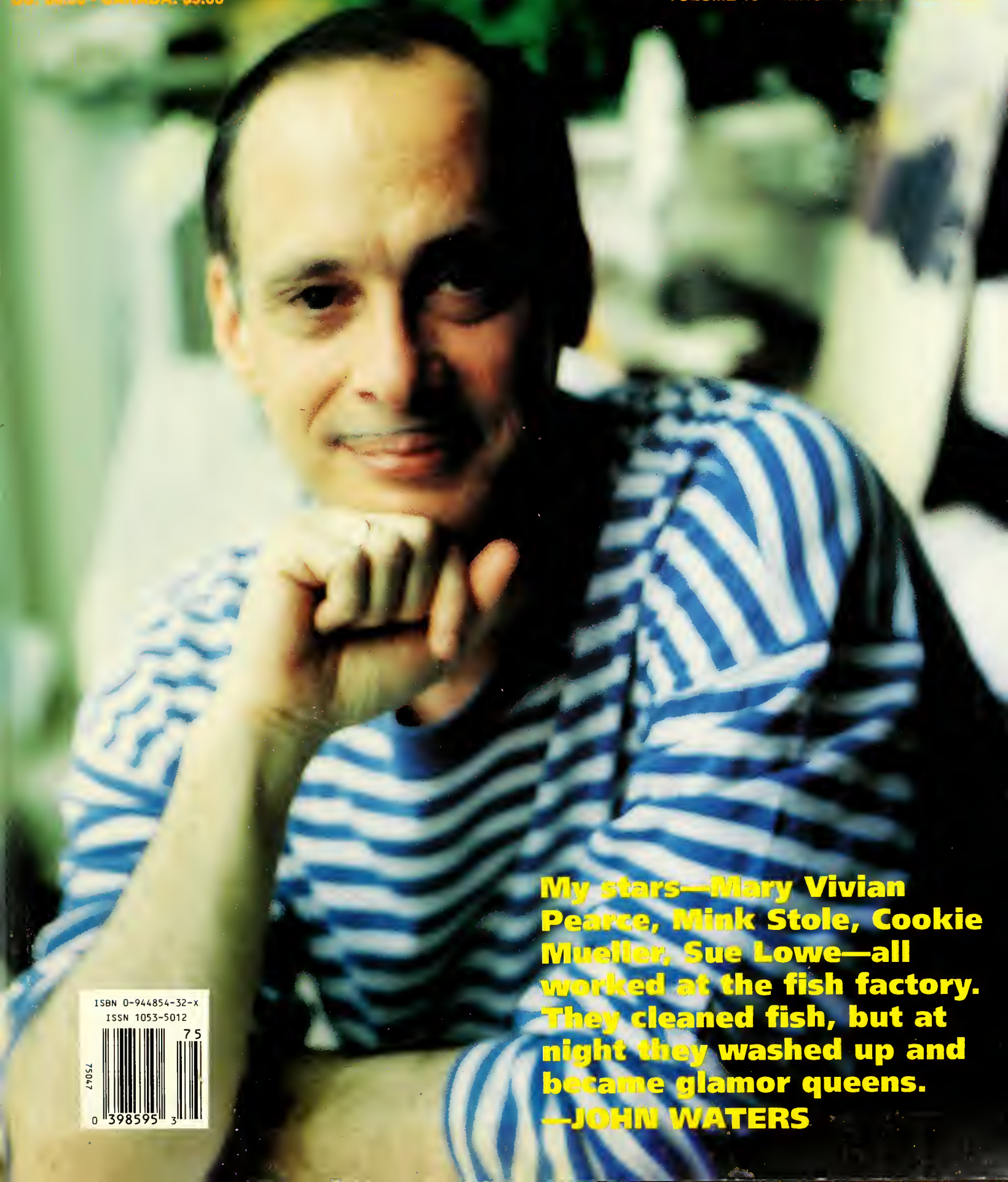
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VOLUME 13 • ANNUAL ISSUE • 1997-98



**My stars—Mary Vivian Pearce, Mink Stole, Cookie Mueller, Sue Lowe—all worked at the fish factory. They cleaned fish, but at night they washed up and became glamor queens.
—JOHN WATERS**

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EXHIBITIONS

May 24-June 19

"CLONING"

June 20-July 10

JENNY HUMPHREYS, DAVID JOHNSON, HABIB KHERADYAR, KAREN MILLER, CRAIG PLEASANTS

July 11-July 31

BOB BAILEY, BREON DUNIGAN, HIROYUKI HAMADA, M.P. LANDIS, DIGBY VEEVERS-CARTER

August 1-August 21

MARY BEHRENS, KAREN FINLEY, JOEL MEYEROWITZ, ANNA POOR, STERCK AND ROZO

August 15-August 17, 8pm

EXPERIMENTAL VIDEO CURATED BY JOCELYN TAYLOR

August 22-September 11

PETER HUTCHINSON, CONRAD MALICOAT, DANIEL RANALLI, TABITHA VEEVERS

September 12-October 2

JAY CRITCHLEY, KAHN/SELESNICK, ARTISTS FROM L.A.'S NEW IMAGE ART GALLERY:

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October 3-October 23

"DOMESTIC BLISS"

Receptions: 1st Friday evenings of exhibition, 7-9pm

Artists Talks: Saturday evenings following openings, 8pm



(Cloning) installation view

READINGS & PERFORMANCES

June 29 LUCY FERRISS - fiction
STEPHEN TAPSCOTT - poems
July 6 JIM MCBRIDE - fiction
JON LOOMIS - poems
July 13 ELLEN DUDLEY - poems
MARTHA RHODES - poems
July 19 GUY STRAUSS - presents "Ava Gardner and the
Pizza Boy" by Lawrence Marsland
July 20 MIRA SCHOR - essays
July 27 NICK FLYNN - poems
TONY HOAGLAND - poems
Aug 3 MARIE HOWE - poems
PAMELA PAINTER - fiction
JASON SHINDER - poems
Aug 8 DAISY WALKER - presents a short play reading
Aug 9 MATTHEW COES presents "Clown Theory"
Aug 10 SARA LONDON - poems
REBECCA WOLF - poems
Aug 24 ANNE-MARIE LEVINE - poems
MOLLY MOYNIHAN - fiction

8PM
Suggested donation
\$4



Jennifer Liese,
Director

Nick Lawrence,
Owner/Curator

Aug 31 SEBASTIAN JUNGER - fiction
Sept. 7 MAGGIE BARRETT - fiction
KATHE IZZO - fiction
Sept. 14 MARIA FLOOK - fiction
Sept. 15 reading of a new dramatic work by
MAGGIE BARRETT
Sept. 21 MICHAEL KLEIN - memoir
WESLEY MCNAIR - poems
Sept. 28 HELEN DUBERSTEIN - poems
TRACI SOBOCINSKI - prose poems
Oct. 5 RICHARD MCCANN - memoir
ROGER WEINGARTEN - poems
Oct. 12 LIZ FODASKI - poems
KIP KOTZEN - fiction
Oct. 19 SARAH BLAKE - fiction & poems
JOSHUA WEINER - poems
DAVID GEWANTER - poems
Oct. 26 POETRY JAM - Lower Cape poets
presented by GUY STRAUSS
Oct 31 HALLOWEEN BASH

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MICHELLE WEINBERG

Cumulative Awards for Provincetown Arts

1996	AMERICAN LITERARY MAGAZINE AWARDS: SPECIAL MENTION FOR DESIGN IN 1995
1995	PUSHCART PRIZE XX: BEST OF THE SMALL PRESSES
1994	AMERICAN LITERARY MAGAZINE AWARDS: FIRST PLACE FOR EDITORIAL CONTENT
1994	EDITOR'S CHOICE IV: ESSAYS FROM THE U.S. SMALL PRESS 1978-92
1994	NOTABLE ESSAYS OF 1993
1993	AMERICAN LITERARY MAGAZINE AWARDS: FIRST PLACE FOR EDITORIAL CONTENT
1993	BEST AMERICAN POETRY
1993	PUSHCART PRIZE XVIII: BEST OF THE SMALL PRESSES
1992	AMERICAN LITERARY MAGAZINE AWARDS: FIRST PLACE FOR EDITORIAL CONTENT & DESIGN
1991	BEST AMERICAN POETRY
1991	NOTABLE ESSAYS OF 1990
1989	PRINT CERTIFICATE OF DESIGN EXCELLENCE
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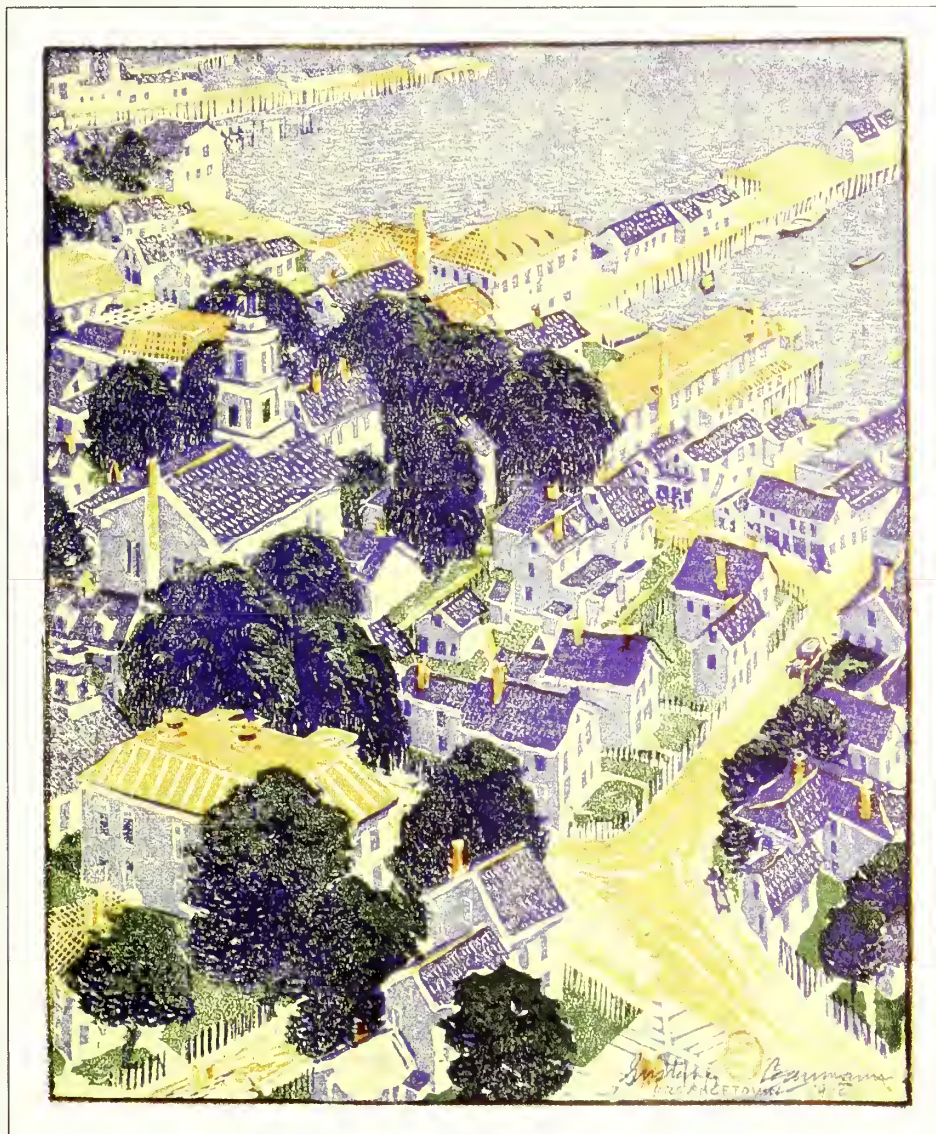
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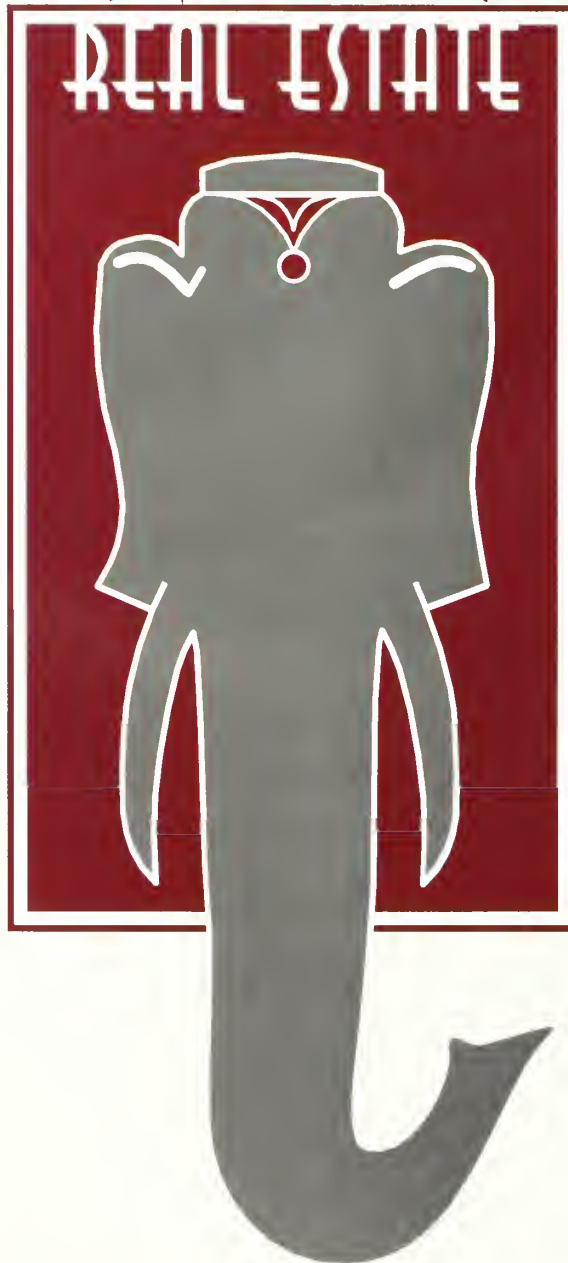
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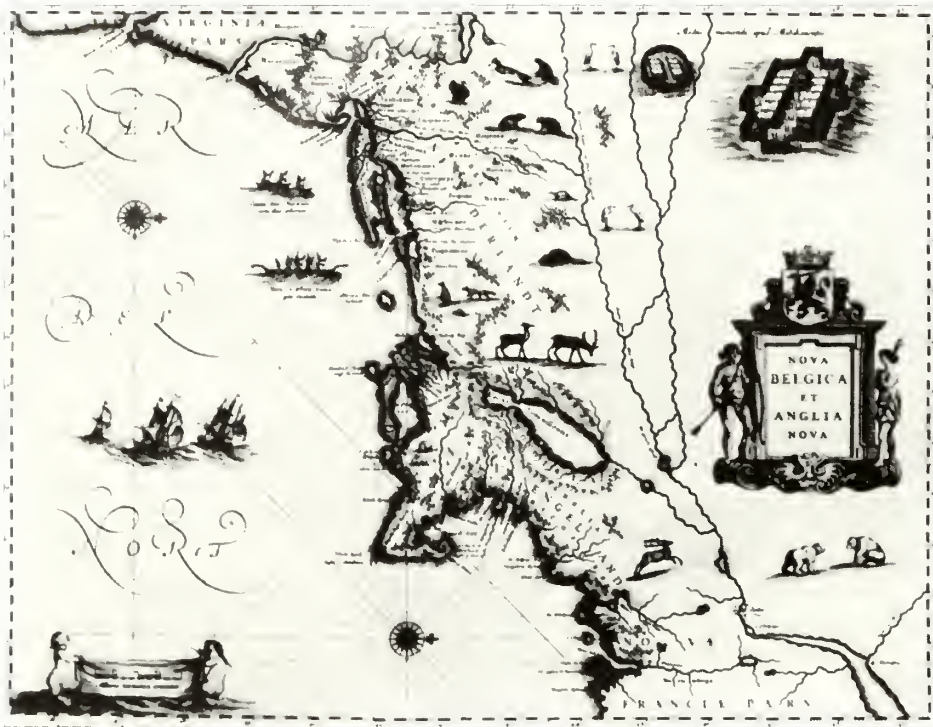


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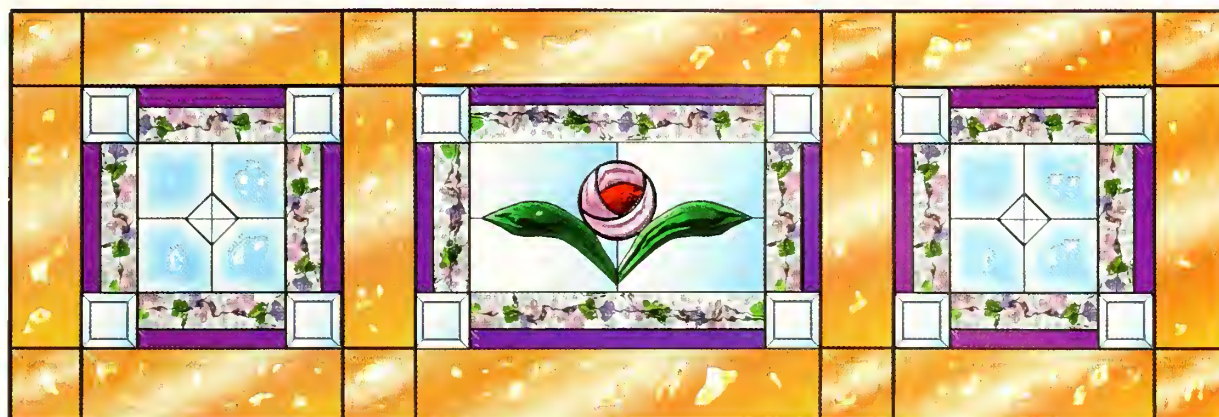
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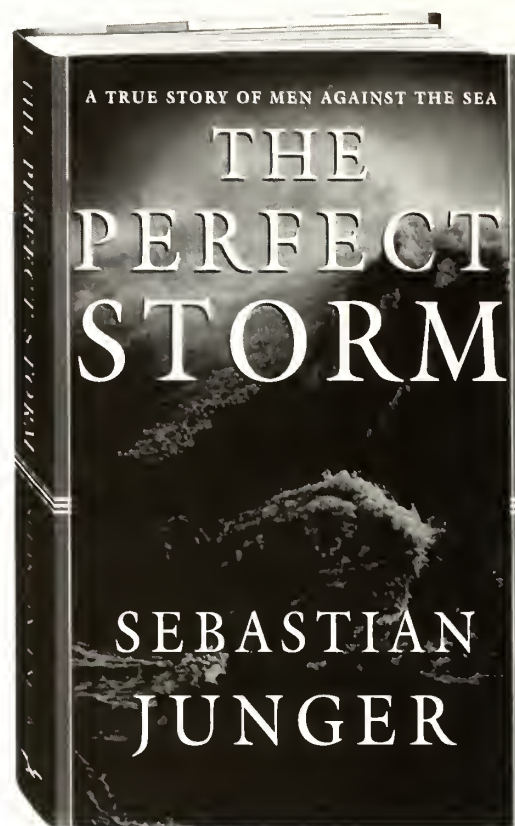
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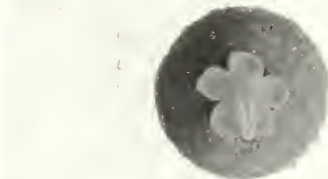


PAT HEARN AND JOHN WATERS, PROVINCETOWN, 1996
PHOTO CHRISTOPHER BUSA



JASON BYRON GAVANN, "JACK PIERSON," 1995

ALBERT MEROLA GALLERY is the new name of the former UFO Gallery in Provincetown. The director, Albert Merola, said that UFO stood for "Universal Fine Objects," but too many people came in looking for the art of aliens. Instead they found the photographs of John Waters and Jack Pierson, or perhaps the paintings of Pasquale Natale. Recently emerged himself, Natale was chosen to curate this year's "Emerging Artists" exhibition at the Provincetown Art Association & Museum. He selected from a loose group sometimes called LaLa ("post-straight and post-gay, post-male and post-female"), which includes the word artist Melanie Braverman, the painter Michael Carroll, the photographer Jason Byron Gavann, the ceramic sculptor Tom McCanna, and the poet-sculptor Sal Randolph, whose work, "Totally Useless," quotes Freud: "This useless thing that we expect civilization to value is beauty."



SAL RANDOLPH "TOTALLY USELESS," 1997

CHERRY STONE GALLERY in Wellfleet, thanks to Sally Nerber and Liz Upham, was an amiable place to experience intimately selected art, including that of Berenice Abbott, Jack Tworlov, Myron Stout, Robert Motherwell, Helen Miranda Wilson, and Paul Bowen. Sally Nerber remains a guiding light for the gallery's new directors, Michael Landis and David Mamo. Young artists themselves, they include Candy Jernigan and Janice Redman in their first season's schedule.



LEFT TO RIGHT IREN HANDSCHUH, MICHAEL LANDIS, DAVID MAMO, SALLY NERBER, JAMES LECHAY, AMY KANDALL IN WELLFLEET, 1996



JENNIFER LIESE

DNA GALLERY's new director, Jennifer Liese, has created a new series of artists talks. She aims to "make the visual verbal. Living in this town, I have loved hearing artists talk about art and have found nuances never mentioned on museum walls." There are return exhibitions by Karen Finley, Tabitha Vevers, Joel Meyerowitz and Tony Black, who shook the walls last year

with his enormous matrix of photographs which succeeded in re-arranging skin color and sexual parts in ways never before seen naturally. This August DNA will host "Three Nights of Experimental Video," including Nam June Paik, Vito Acconci, and Ana Mendieta, in a program curated by Jocelyn Taylor, a New York video artist whose work was recently shown at the Museum of Modern Art.



ELLEN HARRIS WINANS
PHOTO BY SHELLEY VERMILYA

ELLEN HARRIS GALLERY, Provincetown's oldest privately owned gallery, has closed after 25 seasons. The gallery showed many artists of the area, including the ceramic sculptor Al Davis and the painters Hilda Neily and Carol Whorf Westcott. The founder, Ellen Harris, who died this spring, was remarkable for the emphasis she placed on fine crafts, especially glass. Sonny Bayer, director of Impulse Gallery, said that Harris "brought the American craft movement to the consciousness of the Provincetown arts community." Before she died, Harris shared the meaning of her legacy: "The gallery has allowed me to surround myself with beautiful objects and interesting people. It has made me feel part of something larger than myself. The relationship between the creator and the collector is unique and often intimate. How many times I have admired a piece of blown glass or a moody painting and thought about the craftsmanship and emotion that went into creating it. Each piece is an offspring, forged out of a pair of hands."

PROVINCETOWN

1997

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Orlowsky, Katja Oxman,
Elisabeth Pearl, Christina
Schlesinger

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JOSEPH KAMINSKI, KATHI
SMITH, AL WASSERMAN

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MARY KLEIN
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AUGUST 15 - AUGUST 27

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FINE ARTS WORK CENTER MEDAL FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE IN THE ARTS DESIGNED BY GIL FRANKLIN



STANLEY KUNITZ, HOLDING MEDAL
PHOTO BY GORDON LANG-KELLY

THE FINE ARTS WORK CENTER in Provincetown this April appointed Hunter O'Hanian to be the new director. A Boston attorney, O'Hanian lives part time in Provincetown and has served as a Work Center trustee for the past year. In 1993 he received an honorary doctorate in fine arts from the Art Institute of Boston, where he is former chairman of the board. O'Hanian was in New York for a Work Center celebration of a new medal, designed by sculptor Gil Franklin, for Distinguished Service in the Arts. The inaugural recipients of the award were Stanley Kunitz and Louise Bourgeois, both prime movers of the Work Center, now almost 30 years old. In his remarks on receiving the medal, Stanley Kunitz said, "The word 'community' has a special resonance in the world of the arts. One of the idiosyncrasies of American culture is that it has no poetry written into its origin. We inherited, or borrowed, our poetry—mostly hymns and heroic couplets—from Mother England and we've tended, since our industrial coming of age, to regard poets and poetry, and by extension all the fine arts, as irrelevant or frivolous, if not immoral and dangerous. A certain breed of politician, to this very day, has found it profitable to exploit that prejudice. Walt Whitman, who clearly perceived that our prevailing national myth has to do with power, success, money, attempted to supersede it with a myth of democracy and of himself as Democratic Adam. In the end, we should not forget, he died un-

happy, believing that he had failed, that his country had rejected him. We still need to understand that a nation that neglects or suppresses or alienates itself from the creative imagination is already diminished. My guiding principle through the years has been that all true artists, young and old, the living and the dead, are contemporaries; they belong to one another. That is the conviction on which the concept of 'fellowship of the arts' is based."

GROUP GALLERY director Laura Shabott weathered her first year with small regrets: "Being on the water is great, but you are brutally exposed to the elements. The season is short and we are as weather-dependent as a fishing boat. When Hurricane Edouard scared all the tourists away last Labor Day, we had to secure the gallery just as a boat owner must protect his craft. We boarded up the windows and evacuated the art. When I'm really worried about business, I ask a fisherman what to do. They know better than anyone about commerce by the sea." This season's fair weather brings to the gallery a new reading series, organized by Mara Galus.

The HUDSON D. WALKER GALLERY at 24 Pearl Street is a tiny venue in crowded August for the controversial quilt artist, Jenny Humphreys, who continues her critical approach to traditional "women's work" with a wedding dress embroidered with cuts of meat and recipes. Included in the show is her latest artist's book, a kind of hybrid church cookbook/pin-up calendar. Michelle Weinberg will show new pages from her ongoing project, *Handbook for Household Enlightenment*, ready-made drawings which diagram the artist's conception of domestic life.

LONG POINT GALLERY's Fritz Bultman, who died in 1985, was associated with the first-generation abstract expressionists. He was especially respected for his collages, the subject of a forthcoming exhibition at the Georgia Museum of Art, curated by Evan Firestone. With posthumous poetry, the exhibition is funded by the Judith Rothschild Foundation, the legacy of the late abstract painter, Judith Rothschild, who was Bultman's colleague, first during classes with Hans Hofmann and later as co-founder of Long Point.

Scanning the winter and summer schedules of the **PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION & MUSEUM**, one can hear the hum of activity—exhibitions, readings, lectures, book signings, publications, concerts, and an excursion to the Hermitage in Leningrad, led by Robyn Watson, the dynamic director who has brought stability, through community outreach, to the organization. This winter we went to an opening of an exhibition selected from the permanent collection by the fourth grade at Veterans Memorial Elementary School, one of four annual exhibitions curated by students in local schools, and jointly supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Cape Cod Bank

and Trust. Like their adult counterparts, the student curators often provide comments which inform their taste. Liana Papaleo, with glee, chose a white-line woodblock print by her mother, Kathi Smith (whose work is reviewed in this issue). A classmate, Mary Bergman, chose a winter landscape that "reminds me of my uncle's house. It snows a lot where he lives. I like the way the artist makes the river curve."

Provincetown Art Colony: A Chronology and Guide, written by Nyla Ahrens, was published this spring by the Art Association, filling a much-requested need for an introduction to the area's century-long success in attracting independent artists.

The Art Association is a venue for "Richard Florsheim: The Artist in His Time," a traveling exhibition that originated at the Butler Institute of Art in Ohio. Florsheim, who died in 1979, summered for many years in the East End of Provincetown, making paintings based on the shoreline, as he did along Lake Michigan in Chicago where his family name was long established. Florsheim made himself famous by hosting, with his wife Helen, an annual ice cream party for neighborhood children in Provincetown, with tubs of pistachio and double chocolate. August Freundlich, director of the Florsheim Art Fund, which supports catalogues and museum purchases for older artists whose merit is undervalued, points out that Florsheim's legacy is that of a working artist who survived on the income of his art. Yet he was as generous in his will as he was with his ice cream.



DUNE CHARLIE'S SHACK, 1979
PHOTO CHRISTOPHER BUSA

PROVINCETOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM has installed for the season a gritty photographic exhibit, "A Home in the Dunes," that gives the sandblasted feel of life in a dune shack. The curator, Dan Towler, has installed an archival exhibition of rarely-seen documents, including dune journals, and a unique map of the 19 shacks that remain over a four-mile stretch of dunes along



EWA NOGIEC, "HAVANA 1997"



MICHELLE WEINBERG, COUPLES THERAPY, 1996

the outer beach in what is now Cape Cod National Seashore. The bulldozing of Charlie Schmid's shack by the government led to a movement to maintain the fragile, historic structures.

Represented by **RICE/POLAK GALLERY** in Provincetown, Ellen LeBow was invited to exhibit in Havana, Cuba, this February. Ewa Nogiec, art director of this magazine, joined her for a week and photographed the city, whose atmosphere reminded her of her native Poland just before the fall of the communism. Niece Regis, a gallery sculptor who winters in Florida, arrived there in time to see "Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou" at the Miami Art Museum. She pointed out that Vodou art is constructed of fragments of various cultures and Vodou saints all have Christian saint counterpoints, creating intensely surreal figures. From the exhibition catalogue: "Petwo divinity Ezili Danto is a hardworking and fiercely protective mother, linked with Our Lady of Mount Carmel and other madonnas with children. She drinks Barbancourt rum and prefers to eat fried pork. If she smokes, it is unfiltered Camels."

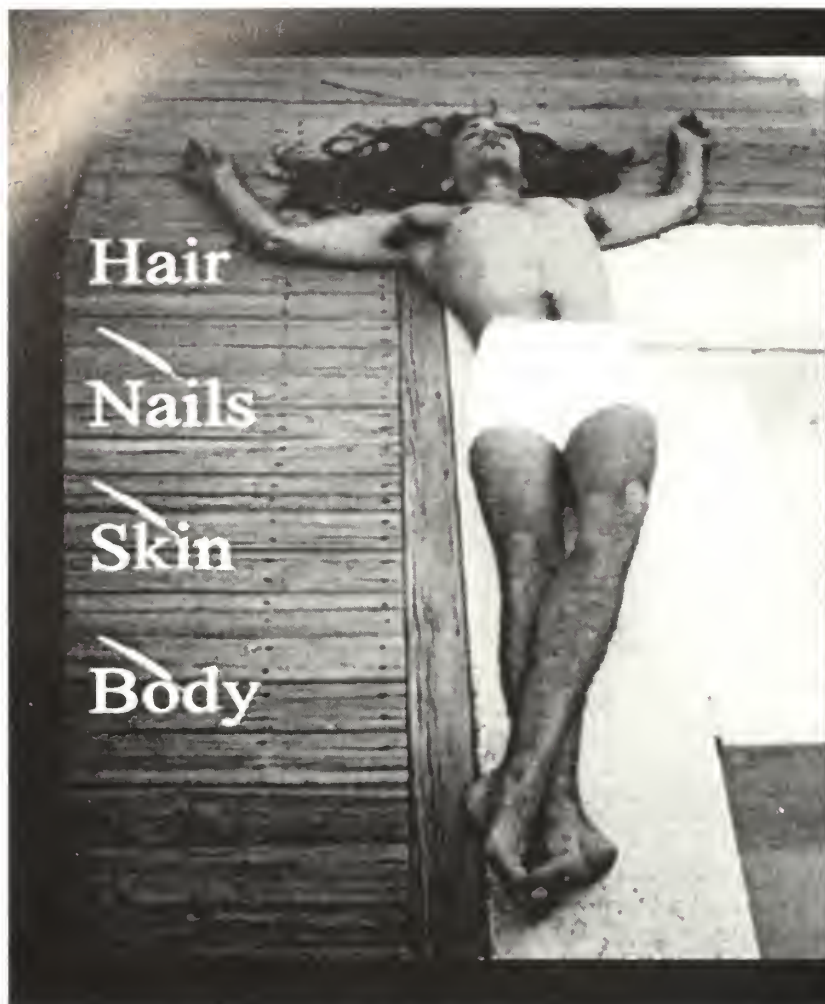
THE TOBAGO INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF ART has agreed to engage Lois Griffel, director of the Cape Cod School of Art, to run a winter painting program on the Caribbean island. Earl de Vries, a native of Aruba and the director of the no-longer extant Underground

Gallery in Provincetown, is the proprietor of the seven-acre site in Amos Vale, Tobago, pictured here. He is planning to construct a 24-room guesthouse. Some of the land will be irrigated and cash crops grown yearround. A two-man fishing vessel and poultry coops will also supply the kitchen.



FUTURE HOME OF TOBAGO INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF ART

Heather Pryce-Wright is a pseudonym for the editor.



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

PETER BUSA, "KISS"
INK ON BOARD, 1965
LOGO OF THE PROVINCETOWN
ARTS PRESS, INC

John Waters summured in Provincetown between 1966 and 1980, every summer, all summer. While working in local bookstores, where he was visible behind the cash register, usually reading, Waters wrote, directed, and promoted his early underground films. *Pink Flamingos*, made in 1972, is now a classic; this spring a new print was released. We are proud that our cover feature by Gerald Peary, detailing Waters's genius as an independent filmmaker, serves as an authentic chapter in film history.

For adults trying to understand how they survived late adolescence, John Waters's movies offer a way, via laughter and life-saving jokes. He is an American Kafka of the awkward age. His greatest joke is a creation called Divine. Doomed to failure as the ideal heterosexual female, she exposes the hilarious hypocrisy of our formative social culture.

At *Provincetown Arts* the cover inspires the approach to the rest of the magazine. A cluster of writings about the creative process, grouped together in a section called "Waterways," acknowledges John Waters's connection to an entirely different set of cultural values. Thus Sebastian Junger shows us how a 100-foot wave is formed, beginning with tickles of tiny capillary waves that the wind uses to get a grip on the surface of the water. Gregory Gillespie, who was not certain he knew who John Waters was, writes about the Watersesque role of the Catholic Church in his own career as an artist. Howard Norman gathers some bits of dialogue about museum-guarding that sound as if they were written by Waters.

Provincetown Arts is like a pie divided into three parts: art, writing, and theater. Theater, to us, is everything that is not art and writing, including the performance art of running the town of Provincetown. Thus we introduce a new section with an interview with Provincetown's longest-serving town manager, Keith Bergman, confident that he will enjoy a neighboring story about the art of clowning.

Provincetown Arts shares the mission of the Provincetown Arts Press, a nonprofit publisher of art and poetry books. Together, we publish about four titles a year. Ewa Nogiec is the art director of both this magazine and the book press. As the century is almost ready to turn, we are planning to celebrate 100 years of continuous activity by the Provincetown art colony. Jennifer Liese, senior editor, will prepare a focus on contemporary art, Forum 99. We will also look backward to the lessons of midcentury by examining the legendary Forum 49 that occurred in Provincetown during the summer of 1949.

The ways of water are everywhere. The protean power of water is enhanced by the passivity of its molecules, which easily expand into mist, condense into ice, or flow in currents or waves. Waters change form. Waters do funny things.

— CHRISTOPHER BUSA

JOHN WATERS
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JOHN WATERS

JOHN WATERS IN PROVINCETOWN

BY GERALD PEARY



We agreed on ground rules on the phone before I flew to interview him in Baltimore. No laborious discussions of his movies. He'd done that so many times before, and there's already an excellent book, John Ives's *John Waters* (Thunder's Mouth Press, 1992), in which his career is analyzed thoroughly via Q & A. Also, please, not another one of those tours of "John Waters's Baltimore." He's exhausted hauling journalists around to show them his fair city's fabulous underbelly. Anyway, what it means for the films was articulated long ago by Waters himself in the "Baltimore, Maryland—Hairdo Capitol of the World" chapter in his great book, *Shock Value* (THUNDER'S MOUTH PRESS, 1981).

Waters wants to talk only about Provincetown. He's genuinely excited about partaking of a detailed oral history of his glorious, deliriously happy (often deliriously drugged), days on the lower Cape. From 1966 to 1980, he spent the whole summer, every summer, living in Provincetown. Normally, he worked in bookstores. Always, he hung with, and shuttled from lowly apartment to apartment with, a bevy of abnormal Baltimore friends. In the early P'town days, they were an unapologetically wild bunch, a veritable Manson family minus the homicides. Swimming on acid and pumped up on speed and dead drunk at the Fo'c'sle, the Baltimoreans shoplifted, stole bicycles, sold drugs, failed invariably at menial jobs, skipped out on their rent, and some fucked everyone in town.

Waters loved all of it. He'd vomit at the New Agey sentiment, but he "found himself" in the midst of P'town chaos. Spiritually, communally, intellectually, sexually, aesthetically. He became a free man. He read every unusual book in his years clerking at the Provincetown Bookstore. He saw every movie playing at P'town's then three movie theaters. In crazy, wonderful P'town, he wrote the sublime, insane screenplays which he'd turn into film productions in Baltimore. *Eat Your Makeup* (1968), *Mondo Trasho* (1969), *Multiple Maniacs* (1970), *Pink Flamingos* (1972), *Female Trouble* (1974), *Desperate Living* (1977), *Polyester* (1981). Each of these films had its second screening in P'town, the summer after the world premiere at home in Baltimore. That was Waters's inviolable rule. History will note that Provincetown is where it happened: gala unveilings to the world of the oeuvre of filmdom's still-undervalued Aristophanes.

What was America like in the 20th century? Schizophrenic! In a time capsule, all you need is a bunch of '50s TV shows with nice moms, decent dads, chummy children, plus the sleepwalking-stalking-heavy breathing nightmare comedies of John Waters. His apparitional ensemble were called Dreamlanders, and they consisted of his motley, squashthe-nuclear-family, Baltimore-to-P'town pals.

Marlon Brando might have hitched to P'town to beg Tennessee Williams for a chance to play Stanley Kowalski in a new play called *Streetcar Named Desire*. P'town is also where a 300-pound Divine ran wild in a dress in the streets, and where he shaved his head and eyebrows to

JOHN WATERS, FILMING *PINK FLAMINGOS*, 1971
PHOTO: STEVE YEAGER
A FEATURE-LENGTH DOCUMENTARY, *DIVINE TRASH: THE MAKING OF PINK FLAMINGOS*, PRODUCED BY STEVE YEAGER, WILL BE RELEASED NEXT YEAR

What's the first you heard of Provincetown?



JOHN WATERS IN THE PROVINCETOWN BOOKSHOP, 1972
PHOTO STEVE YEAGER

emerge as the dog turd-consuming "Filthiest Person Alive" in Waters's classic *Pink Flamingos*.

May I add what a joy it was visiting Waters in Baltimore? He's a sweet, funny, civil man. I'm being gossipy, but he has high-minded books in his lovely house, and brilliant modern art. John Updike could be comfortable here. Even the crazy stuff is neatly framed: an enviable Patty Hearst collage, delicious posters of matricide maven Patty McCormack in *The Bad Seed*, and snarling Ann Margaret in *Kitten With a Whip*. The shelves are tightly organized: downstairs, fine books any intellectual might have; upstairs (remember Alfred Hitchcock), serial-killer lit. Also a tiny alcove of peculiar presents from Travis Bickle-type fans.

After taping, Waters and I discussed Karl Marx and T.S. Eliot. Not really. We talked of the last days of Liberace, the "real" Pia Zadora, Michael Jackson's off-putting sex life, and the odd fact that we are probably the only two people on earth to have interviewed 1950s Hollywood star Dorothy Malone at the Dallas Country Club. He showed me a cut-out picture of Zsa Zsa Gabor after 3000 facelifts, huffing along with her heavy-as-Divine, middle-aged daughter.

At last, Waters broke his no-tour rule and, because I'm such a genuine fan, took me to Divine's grave at a cemetery above a shopping center. There lay the immortal Glenn Milstead

(1945-1988). But Waters hates, hates, hates sports, so there was no convincing him to drive me to Babe Ruth's boyhood home. In his half-century in Baltimore, Waters is proud that he's never ventured to the baseballer's birthplace.

While in Baltimore (great town, great Southern food: New Orleans without the attitude), I also met with friendly ex-Provincetowners associated with Waters' movies: Pat Moran, Vincent Peranio, Susan Lowe, Mary Vivian ("Bonnie") Pearce. Others were talked to later by phone where they lived: Dennis Dermody in New York, Mink Stole in L.A., Sharon Niesp and Channing Wilroy in Provincetown.

Waters was happiest that our story would be as much a celebration of his Dreamland group on the Cape as about his time there. Of course, many of the key Dreamlanders with the most amazing Provincetown histories are no longer alive. It's to them that this feature on John Waters is dedicated: John Liesenring, David Lochary, Howard Gruber, Cookie Mueller, and Divine. ■

I was in Baltimore in the summer of 1965, and that had been a bizarre year for me. I'd been expelled from NYU for pot, and they told my parents I needed extensive psychiatric treatment. I'd come home to Baltimore and made this movie, *Roman Candles*. I was very confused, and somebody said to me, "Have you ever been to P'town? It's a very weird place." It was a guy named Doug, who was sort of the beatnik I wanted to be.

This was a very long time ago—I had a girlfriend at the time, that's how long ago it was! I changed her name to Mona Montgomery in my book, *Shock Value*, because I don't know where she is today. She's not in show business and she's not a public figure. Anyway, we hitched to P'town. I don't know how my parents felt about it, but I was 19, and there wasn't much they could do.

Can you recall your first sight of P'town?

I remember getting off Route 6 by the A & P and walking up and seeing Commercial Street and thinking, "God, is this cool!" And the first person I saw on "The Benches" at Town Hall (The Benches were then what Spiritus Pizza at 2:00 A.M. might be now) was Moulty, from the Barbarians. They were the only rock act to come from P'town and have a huge hit, "Are You a Boy or Are You a Girl?" He had hair to his waist, a two-year growth, which meant that he'd start growing long hair before anyone else in the world. *Plus* he had a hook instead of a hand, which is something I always wanted. I was so impressed. I thought this must be the coolest place I've ever been, although Mona and I didn't know anybody.

We got this tiny room on Bradford Street with a lecherous landlord. He tried to come into our room and actually, I guess, have sex, though we never did. We ran into Mink Stole's sister Sique and also this woman named Flo, both from Baltimore, and they showed us around a bit. But we only stayed two weeks because we were broke.

But you quickly returned?

The next year, 1966, I came for the summer, with Mona and Mary Vivian Pearce. We stayed at a place on the corner of Pearl and Bradford, where the landlady said we could never have a visitor. What? We're 20 years old. We thought she was kidding. The first day, we had someone over, and the landlady came in screaming. God, our guest wasn't staying there or anything! Rather strict!

Mona worked at a dress shop called the Queen of Diamonds, and I got a job across the street at a clothing store called No Fish Today. The owner quickly learned to hate me. I was



MOLLY MALONE COOK AND JOHN WATERS, 1995
PHOTO MARY OLIVER

fired after a week because she'd come in and I'd be sitting there reading. I think she expected me to say to the customers how great they looked in our Levi's. I wasn't very good at the job.

Instead, I went to work in the East End Bookshop for Molly Malone Cook, who was a photographer at the time, and Mary Oliver, then a struggling poet. They couldn't really afford to hire me, but they let me work when it rained, when P'town bookstores are packed. So wherever I was when it was about to rain, I had to RUN to work! But I loved being there because Molly was a great boss. She did not believe the customer was always right. As a matter of fact, the customer was always wrong.

I saw Molly snatch a book out of someone's hand and say, "Get out!" I was very impressed. I thought, "This is my kind of job."

At the time, they worked a lot with Norman Mailer. If anyone said something bad about Mailer, I was allowed to be really rude and say, "Get out of the store and never come back!" Molly encouraged it, so it was fun to work there.

I loved them, and I'm still friends with them. I was at their table at the ceremony in New York when Mary won the National Book Award. Very exciting!

But you moved on to the Provincetown Bookshop.

The third summer, 1967, I came back and Elloyd Hansen and Joel Newman offered me a full-time job, which was weird because they were kind of competitors to Molly and Mary. They sought me out, I don't know why, but probably because I was passionate about books. I decided to work there because it was the only way I could afford the outrageous summer rents.

It was great because, as part of the job, you could have any book as long as you read it. I didn't abuse the policy. On the recommendation of Elloyd, I got a valuable reading list of free

books I'd never heard of in my life. I also got \$100 a week, which was really a fortune then, more money than anyone I knew made. But the greatest thing was that every winter they closed up, and I could go anywhere in the country and collect unemployment, and some of the early movies were financed by that.

When I showed my movies in P'town, the Bookshop let me turn the window into a billboard. Elloyd and Joel were such good bosses they didn't care if my friends hung out. Mary Vivian Pearce and David Lochary would come in every single day.

Do you remember your first Provincetown screening?

In the 1960s, many churches were almost political. They would do almost anything to attract hippies. So I asked the reverend of the church on Shank Painter Road (who he was, I have no recollection) whether we could show the movie there. He was nice about it, though he never saw my movie, *Eat Your Makeup*.

Among the cast was Marina Melin, who had worked at Queen of Diamonds, and who I'd taken back to Baltimore to be a Dreamland star. The film is about models who are kidnapped and have to eat their makeup and model themselves to death. I got the idea from the candy store, the Penny Patch, which I still go to in Provincetown. They sold candy lipstick with the little slogan, "Eat Up Your Make Up."

To promote our screening, I went in and bought every candy lipstick. Bonnie (Mary Vivian Pearce) dressed in full Jean Harlow drag, the way she dressed every single day of her life. We would walk up and down Commercial Street, I would hand people a flyer from the movie, she would hand them candy lipstick and say, "Eat it, read it, and come."

People thought we were giving them drugs! But we sold out at the church. The crowd reaction was fine, though *Eat Your Makeup* only showed in Baltimore and P'town because it was so technically bad.

Also, it was in horribly bad taste for a church showing.

Divine was Jackie Kennedy. We had the whole assassination scene, in which she climbs over the junk in the car, covered in blood. At the time, only a few years after the real assassination, believe me it was eyebrow-raising! JFK was played by Howard Gruber, who lived many years in Provincetown and owned the restaurant Front Street.

Your living arrangements?

In 1966, Mona and Mary Vivian Pearce and I had a basement apartment. It was OK, though the ceilings were so low that I couldn't stand up. When we had parties, I had to be hunched over serving food. Meanwhile, my breakup with Mona was very gradual/weird because we hung out with a very mixed group of people—gay, straight—though it did sort of happen that the final breakup was in that apartment.

Was Mona your last girlfriend?

Yes.

There's one extremely odd place you lived in 1967.

Prescott Townsden's tree fort! It was right behind The Moors restaurant, but it's no longer there. Even the tree is no longer there. I lived there with Mink's sister, Sique, and Flo, who both worked at the A & P.

Prescott was about 78 years old, I think from a very wealthy family in Boston, and the first gay liberationist I ever heard of. He would ride around the beaches on a little motorcycle giving out gay liberation material. Mink became engaged to him. She was about 17, so it was a strange time. Was it a serious engagement? I don't know. They certainly didn't have sex.

Living in that tree fort was like Swiss Family Robinson. It was part of an old abandoned submarine, kind of like a lunatic had built it, and there was no roof, so rain poured in. But you could live there for free if Prescott liked you, and I can remember it as some of the happiest moments of my life, of complete freedom for the first time. I was away from everything I rebelled against.

You'd climb a rope ladder, and then there were apartments, if you could call them that. There was one mixed couple, he black, she white, with three mixed children, which was kind of radical for the time. We also lived with a guy named Alan Dahl, who was a bleach-blond fashion radical. He was great. He wasn't my boyfriend or anything, but communal living was inspiring, and we certainly had fun.

And summer 1968?

I lived in a little rented cottage with Mary Vivian Pearce on Mechanic Street called Aspin. It's still there. I had a boyfriend, John Liesenring, and for a while I lived with him. He played the "shrimper" in *Mondo Trasho*, but he's no longer with us. People always ask me if I sleep with people in my movies. I think beside him there was only one other person in my movies I slept with and it was years after the filming. No, not Divine.

The first time I had a glamorous apartment was in 1970 when I lived with Mink away from the water, on Franklin Street, where Chaim Gross's studio was. It had a glass roof with different colors in the glass, and a pool, and a bridge you walked over, and a fireplace, very Kim Novak. My other apartments with Mary Vivian



ORIGINAL PENNY PATCH SIGN JOHN WATERS COLLECTIONS

Pearce had been pretty bad: linoleum floors and dropped ceilings.

Was there any P'town scene you wished then to be part of?

There was one person I was obsessed with. Her name was Donna, and she lived with Brick and Ron. They were hairdressers, and Donna was their artwork. Every day they spent all day getting her dressed. She had this amazing '60s look, long before anyone had it; Sassoon hairdo, mini-skirt, 25 sets of eyelashes. Every night about 11:30, they'd walk her through town on the way to the A-House. I think that was their job, that they were paid to go there.

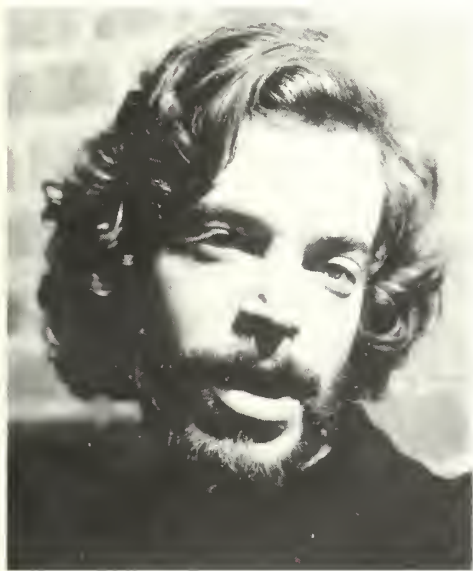
Donna was upper echelon, the Queen of Fag Hags, and we were lowly yippies. By the end of the summer Donna said "Hello" to Bonnie. To me, she might nod, or wave like a queen.

Ten years later, I met Donna. I told her how I was *obsessed* by her. She's much more normal now, has a husband, but remembers those days fondly. I know that one of the others, Brick or Ron, was in a shootout with the police in

Provincetown on June 1 and work at the Bookshop. I worked there for—I don't know—seven years? A long time. I could still work there today. When I go in now, I feel like walking behind the counter and saying, "Yes, we have *The Outermost House*." We sold millions of copies of that one!



DIVINE, 1980S PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN



HOWARD GRUBER IN *MULTIPLE MANIACS*, 1970
PHOTO LAWRENCE IRVINE, DREAMLAND PRODUCTIONS

Provincetown. They did a lot of speed then, but so did we.

The pills came from Dr. Hiebert, who is no longer with us, the notorious Dr. Feelgood of Provincetown. He seemed to have given diet pills to everyone in the town. I think he didn't know that everyone was getting high. But I was six-foot-one and weighed 130 pounds. It was kind of hard to think I should go on a diet.

On a bicycle I sold diet pills that I'd gotten from Dr. Hiebert. I sold them to friends. It wasn't that I was a major dealer, but it was once the only way to raise money for underground movies.

By this time, 1968-70, you were seriously into filmmaking.

Everyone but me lived in Provincetown in the winter. I'd go away to "further my career." I needed more action. I'd go to California or to Baltimore and make movies, such as *Mondo Trasho* and *Multiple Maniacs*. Then I'd come back

Also by this time, many Dreamlanders from your films were P'town regulars.

Besides Baltimore, it was the other city where we all lived, though the reputation of the Baltimore people was not really high because of the dubious practice by some of not paying rent.

My stars—Mary Vivian Pearce, Mink Stole, Cookie Mueller, Sue Lowe—all worked at the fish factory. They cleaned fish, but at night they washed up and became glamor queens.

There was the time after *Multiple Maniacs* when Mink, Sue, and Cookie Mueller hitched to Provincetown. They were almost raped along the way. This time was the height of drugs, lunacy, and fag-haggness, and they would have made the Manson girls run, these girls!

Mink looked like she looked in *Multiple Maniacs*. Her image was the religious whore, black lipstick, black nail polish, and she was covered in rosaries. Sue wore skirts we used to call "cunt ticklers." Skirts so short her vagina just showed! Quite a look! And Cookie was Janis Joplin meets Susan Atkins. They were punkish 10 years before punk. Their attitude: make fun of hippies, peace, and love, which our films also did. All these little earth mothers baking bread and then Sue, Mink, and Cookie arrive!

The police said to Sue, "Even for Provincetown you can't dress like that, look like that." They made her leave town. She was the wildest Dreamland girl of them all. Remember the Foc's'le? Cookie was in there always. The Provincetown *Advocate* used her picture to illustrate an article about alcoholism. The headline was SKULKING IN THE DEPTHS OF ALCOHOLIC DEPRIVITY. She sued and won, I don't know how!



DIVINE, 1982 PUBLICITY PHOTO

Did Cookie ever work?

Let's just say "she got by." She lived on Railroad Avenue, I remember that, and she chose to have her son, Max, in Provincetown. She moved to New York, then she'd come back in the summers with her girlfriend, Sharon Niesp. Sharon's a big part of my later Provincetown, maybe '75 on.

And Divine in P'Town?

Divine always believed he was a millionairess, even when he didn't have a penny. He was really fiscally irresponsible. The most shocking thing he did was that he had a job in a gourmet cooking shop and took all the money. He did not bother to cover it up. At the end of the summer, when they asked, "Where are the books?" he said, "I lost them." His reputation was pretty strange. When his landlady was away one weekend, Divine paid an auctioneer in full black tie to auction off all the landlady's furniture in his apartment, antiques and stuff, to cover his rent. That's how he would think. He had to sneak back into P'town for a long time, after she called the police.

Divine never believed anything was going to happen to his career. After *Multiple Maniacs*, he was penniless with Cookie in Provincetown in the winter. The poorest they ever were. Divine was obsessed with Christmas, really wanted a Christmas tree, so they sawed down a decorated one growing on someone's lawn. Legend has it that it was the lawn of the chief of police. The theft made the front page, the town was pissed off, but Divine never got caught.

I was in San Francisco, and *Multiple Maniacs* was playing at a theater called the Palace, which was a big deal. I called Divine and said, "They are paying you to come to California." He didn't believe me. Van Smith was there, my costume designer who was responsible for Divine's looks. I said, "Do something weird with his hair." Van shaved the front of Divine's head, what would become the *Pink Flamingos* look. Divine got on a plane for San Francisco *without one penny*, in full

drag and with this pathetic little purse. When he got off the plane, the Cockettes were there at the airport, it was a huge media event, and he was a star. He never went back in his mind. He was no longer Glenn Milstead.

I don't think he went back to Provincetown from 1971 until a few years later, as a star instead of a criminal on the run. He'd blatantly ripped off so many people there, and I don't think they were impressed by his stardom, but the statute of limitations must have run out.

Back in Provincetown in 1976, he acted with Holly Woodlawn in *Women Behind Bars* at the Pilgrim House. He lived with Holly as roommates—you can imagine that! A famous story about him was that he was driving so stoned on pot that when he was looking to check his name on the marquee, he drove his whole car through the window of Land's End Marine Supply.

And David Lochary?

His favorite thing to do in the ripoff years was to get a job in a Provincetown restaurant, and then the second day throw himself on the floor and say he hurt his shoulder. He'd get workmen's compensation. I saw him spend a whole summer in a fake neckbrace, but he couldn't go down to the beach because of insurance agents, though there was nothing wrong with him. I lived one summer with David and David's boyfriend, Tom, who was killed in a boating accident. We lived right behind the Mexican Shop, and MDA was the drug that summer, though I don't know quite what was in it.

What are your memories of places in P'town?

I'll always remember The Benches! That was the main hangout then. And behind the bas relief, depicting the signing of the Mayflower Compact, across from Town Hall, was the big gay scene. It was shocking to think people were giving blow jobs on the other side of a 12-inch wall of bronze, so close to the police station.

There was a great theater around 1966-67 called Act Four, and Mary Vivian Pearce and I went to every performance. We were on speed watching the shock-value plays with off-off-off-Broadway theater with lots of nudity.

Piggy's was also great in the '70s, a bar that was totally mixed, gay and straight. That's my favorite kind of bar. I don't like segregation. Dennis Dermody was deejay there, and that was where we went every single night. And the A-House was the coolest, where all the jazz greats played. When Reggie Cabral died, I genuflected in the alley outside the A-House. And his wife, Mira, who I was fascinated by, died too.

The Little Room in the A-House was always gay. They were very smart and hired straight men to be the bartenders, and boy did they make a lot of money! The big room, you didn't know each year if it would be gay or straight, but it was good either way. It wasn't like now, always 100% gay.

The Art Cinema and the New Art Cinema, owned by Bill and Fran Shafir, and the two theaters owned by Monte Rome, The Movies and Metro, premiered all my movies: *Alondo Trasho*, *Multiple Maniacs*, *Pink Flamingos*, *Female Trouble*, and *Desperate Living*. With Bill Shafir, who is since dead, I had to "four-wall," meaning I was financially responsible for every seat in the house, but we always sold out, which was great for both of us.

Bruce Goldstein, who books Film Forum in New York, was programming The Movies at the time, the competing theater across the street, upstairs where Whaler's Wharf is now. He showed my films in repertory.

Then Howard Gruber opened Front Street. That was the big hangout for the last years, the cocaine era, and that place was really jumping. I think Front Street was the last really big club scene. Howard died in Provincetown of AIDS in 1993.

Did your group mingle with the famous artists and writers of P'town?

We didn't hang out with famous people. We didn't know any of them. Robert Motherwell, I knew only because he was one of the best book customers. He certainly didn't know me as a film director. I was a book clerk.

I saw Faye Dunaway and Peter Wolf, because they made out in the store for half an hour. And I remember the funniest thing, seeing Judy Garland walking down Commercial Street with 10,000 gay people following her like the Pied Piper. She went into the little bar at the A-House. She was pretty drunk, in bad shape, having fun, wearing a big hat. It was like the Virgin Mary appearing, a Miracle. Imagine: JUDY GARLAND LIVE IN PROVINCETOWN!

You've mentioned how *Eat Your Makeup* was inspired by candy bought in a candy store in Provincetown. What other props did you locate locally for your movies?

Do you remember in *Multiple Maniacs* where I had that giant lobster rape Divine? That was inspired by the postcard they sold in Provincetown for 20 years: a big lobster over the sky at the beach. I wrote *Desperate Living* about the worst community you could live in. It wasn't Provincetown but it was certainly about living in an eccentric small town. When writing *Polyester* in Provincetown, I'd go every day next door to Dennis Dermody's house and we'd watch the "normal" family on *Father Knows Best*. That's how I was raised. In the *Polyester* script, I tried to subvert it.

What were your last complete summers spent in Provincetown?

In 1979 and 1980, when I wrote *Polyester* there. In the '80s, I would stay with Howard. In the last years, I've stayed by myself. If I go for a short time, I'll always stay at the White Horse Inn. I like Frank Schaefer, the owner. His place is very homey, and I feel comfortable there. But here's one thing I don't understand about Provincetown. Why isn't there a nice hotel with a phone in the room? It's a nightmare for me. I

have to have a phone in my business. Nobody has phones except the Holiday Inn. I'm going to go to Provincetown and stay at the Holiday Inn?

Does P'town today strike you as substantially different from when you first arrived in the '60s?

People always say that Provincetown is different. I think it's always exactly the same. Many of those shops have been there for 25 years. They must make money. I think sometimes if I dropped a Kleenex in 1965 it's still there. I go always into Adams' Drugstore for a vanilla Coke. Otherwise, I never order a vanilla Coke anywhere else. It's really amazing how Provincetown stays the same. In a great way.

Provincetown was a little more mixed, gay and straight together. Certainly there were less lesbians. That's the big difference now: cool summer lesbians. I'm a big lesbian hag. Punk lesbians? They're my favorite.

Except for AIDS, kids at 20 are having exactly the same wild summers we had at 20 years old. It's always remained pretty radical. My parents never came to visit me there. Never. To this day they'd be shocked and nervous walking down the street. If you aren't used to Provincetown, it can still be disorienting.

Do kids stop you on the street in P'town today?

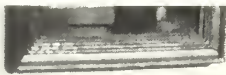
They do. I feel like Uncle Remus: "Let me tell you of the time that Divine ate dog shit." But it's great: many kids today have this amazing knowledge of exploitation films, which they've discovered on all these weird videos. At Sundance, they actually called me "Sir."

Sir, no more drugs?

As I started having success about the time of *Pink Flamingos*, I gradually stopped taking drugs, but I can't do anti-drug ads. I can't be that much of a hypocrite. But I'm not pro-drugs because many of the people who took them with me, including David Lochary, are dead because of drugs. Cookie and I were estranged for a while because of her use of drugs, but we made up later in life. She died of AIDS in New York but she was in Provincetown till near the end, when she was very sick.

And your future in Provincetown?

I'd like to have a house there: that's one of my last fantasies! And I haven't missed a summer since 1965, even if it's just being there one weekend. Something bad would happen to me if I missed my annual Provincetown visit. ■



MARY VIVIAN PEARCE

MINK STOLE

SUSAN LOWE

SHARON NIESP

VINCENT PERANIO

CHANNING WILROY

DENNIS DERMODY

PAT MORAN

MARY VIVIAN PEARCE AND DAVID LOCHARY IN *MULTIPLE MANIACS*, 1970
PHOTO: LAWRENCE IRVINE, NEW LINE CINEMA

Superstars of Dreamland

MARY VIVIAN PEARCE

John Waters loathes sports metaphors, so I'll use one instead for Mary Vivian ("Bonnie") Pearce, Waters's great pal since high school. She's the Lou Gehrig of Dreamlander cinema, with the longevity record of eight straight Waters films. Her string began when she danced sexily in 1964's *Hag in a Leather Jacket*, and it concluded with her poor, harassed princess in 1977's *Desperate Living*. (Later, she's somewhere about in 1994's *Serial Mom*.) On screen, Pearce is the ditsy, paroxided Jean Harlow who moves lithely as a silent movie apparition, even as she (often) removes her blouse. Or has her toes sucked—who can forget the eye-popping scene?—in *Mondo Trasho* (1969). In *Female Trouble* (1974), she plays a fascist beautician. Normally, she's Waters's ingenue-in-residence, his neurotic "nice" girl who, alas, gets molested and defiled. Something's ever-seedy in Waters's blighted Baltimore.

Acting in *Pink Flamingos* ("I was with the good guys, of course."), Pearce is proud to have led an actors' revolt over the fact that cast and crew weren't fed. "John sneered when I complained to him," she recalled. "But the next week there was cheap wine for lunch and bologna sandwiches."

Pearce lives in a downtown Baltimore apartment with two cats. That's where I interviewed her. She's no longer a dyed blonde, though she's certainly got her Dreamland superstar, good-breeding looks. For years Pearce worked at the racetracks. This spring, she retired to become . . . a bicycle messenger. When she asked Waters for a reference, he replied, "What should I say if they call? That you can ride a

two-wheeler?" Pearce is completing an MFA in Creative Writing at Johns Hopkins University, specializing in short stories, one of which is published in this issue.

...

In 1965 I had a Baltimore apartment with Pat Moran, when John went to P'town with Mona and came back impressed. "It's really cool. Everyone's gay or they're 'heads,' or they're gay heads." The next summer, I went with John and Mona.

I was 18, and it was three months after I got married. My husband was a jockey at Saratoga, and he told my father I'd left him and run off with beatniks. I was so pissed at him for telling! As far as I was concerned, it was a fake marriage to get me out of the house. I'd taken all our wedding presents back and bought books and records.

We got to P'town before Memorial Day, and it was freezing. But we wanted to be at the opening day of restaurants and get free food. We'd go to art openings and guzzle the wine. Later, we'd go to Piggy's or the A-House and as soon as people went to dance, we'd snatch their beers. There was a restaurant across from the A-House. I'd go there and snatch people's food. We had a basement apartment, and I'd cut through the back yard. We got thrown out because a guy complained to the landlady that I hopped his fence.

I'd been dying my hair blonde since I was 14. In P'town, I cut it short, began wearing red lipstick and looking like Jean Harlow. It was kind of harsh, not as pretty as Marilyn Monroe, who I really wanted to look like. But I remember I

had a really good time. Dr. Hiebert gave me speed, "black beauties." I told him I wanted to be a model, for an acting part. He said, "OK, do you want the strong pills?" He was very old, and fell asleep examining people.

Speed was easily available. You could go into any doctor's mailbox and get free samples, or get it prescribed: it was either for depression or obesity, and everyone was fat or depressed. You didn't have to spend money on food, and speed gave you a lot of energy. For example, it would take us about 10 hours to get dressed and put on makeup for our movie premieres. We could start at 10 in the morning with a couple of hits.

Because I'd worked at the race track and knew how to ride, I got a job at the stable taking people horseback riding through the trails and dunes. But I got fired because of too much P'town night life. I'd be out until two or three in the morning. I'd have to get to the stable at nine, but I was showing up for work at noon.

So I was a chambermaid at a hotel. They'd pick me up, in this carpool of other maids, local girls. I was hideous. I lay around on beds watching TV. Then I was a waitress at the Flagship, and had to get this outfit that was supposed to look like a peasant. I didn't last long. I poured coffee in someone's lap. One person gave me a nickel tip I gave him such bad service. The owner said I had a mental block.

Then I had a job at Bridge's Breakfast. I lasted a week. Then I worked in a dress shop, and they liked the way I looked. I didn't do *anything*. Sometimes children screamed when I moved because they thought I was a mannequin. Then I was at the fish factory. There, they found out

that I was a movie actress because I tacked an article about it next to a clipping about the record for packed lobster tails.

Something happened during the time I was at the Buttery washing dishes. I was interested in joining the Venceremos Brigade in Cuba and I was reading *Ninety Miles From Home* in my room. There was a knock, and I was afraid: someone had followed me from a bookstore and caught me stealing. I opened it—and this guy had a gun. I pushed the gun, and he ran away. I told the P'town police he looked like a used car salesman. So the next day, they drove me to a used car lot!

My reaction was that I went out and got dead drunk, though the rumor about town was that I'd kicked the gun out of his hand.

I rode an old Schwinn bicycle covered with rust, but I almost got caught selling a stolen bicycle. The police took me in, and questioned me. Somehow they believed me when I told them I'd bought it from a dishwasher.

Did I go to the beach? Oh, no. Jean Harlow with a tan? I wanted to keep my nightclub palor. I'd wear No. 50 in the shade to watch the sun set.

Some Dreamlanders almost never had sex. We shoplifted and took speed, yet we all got crabs one summer. There was John, boiling his underwear! And John and I got scabies, too. The doctor told John he hadn't seen a case since migrant workers in the 1930s.

MINK STOLE

John Waters calls her "one of the most talented members of my film repertory group." She's been in his films since 1966, when she appeared in the *Chelsea Girls*-influenced (three 8mm films shown simultaneously) *Roman Candles*. She's notorious as the lesbian rapist administering a "Rosary Job" to poor Divine in *Multiple Maniacs* (1970), but she's most internationally famous as the repulsive pre-Yuppie, Connie Marble, in *Pink Flamingos* (1972). Her greatest acting job (if only there were Oscars for tasteless John Waters indies) was as the woe-ridden mad housewife in *Desperate Living* (1977).

Stole has lived in LA for seven years. Nobody from the East Coast believes her when she says, "I love California very much." She told me on the phone. "I'm sitting in a beautiful apartment with a lovely back yard. I don't mind if I never see another snow flake, except when I've chosen to go on a winter vacation."

Alone of living Dreamlanders, Stole has pursued acting outside of Waters's movies. There were dry times she blames on herself: "I was clueless, believing in my 'natural' quality, that acting classes would spoil it. And I had a grandiose sense of my own importance, that, instead of having to audition, theaters should call me. Well, they never called."

Still, she's had a colorful career. She did off-off-Broadway plays with the Theater of the Ridiculous's Charles Ludlam, dinner theater back

home in Baltimore, and lots of alternative plays, including the dramas of Tom Eyen, while living in San Francisco. "Divine and I did shows there with the Cockettes." Since Stole moved to LA, she's done voiceover work (she's the off-screen voice of the head juror in David Lynch's *Lost Highways*), and played a recurring role as a teacher on the Nickelodeon Channel's children's series, *The Secret World of Alex Mack*.

Stole has an independent film about to come out, *Pink As the Day She Was Born*, in which, she said, "I play the proprietor of a highly stylized S&M bordello."

...

I'd always wanted to be an actress. When I met John in Provincetown it was fortuitous, though then he was more a friend of my sister, Sique.

My first summer there was 1966, when I lived in the Silva A-frame on Bradford Street. I moved from there to Prescott Townsden's place, separate units got together by gangplanks, and Prescott and I got engaged. He was homosexual and 78 years old, and he bought me a diamond ring. There was speculation he might want children. The next summer, we broke our engagement, an amicable separation. I hooked up with Chan Wilroy in one apartment at Prescott's. There were four or five units, and John lived there, and my sister.



MINK STOLE IN *DESPERATE LIVING*, 1976
PHOTO STEVE YEAGER, NEW LINE CINEMA

We could all kick ourselves: there are no photographs of the tree fort. It burned down in 1969 or '70, and the town was so pleased that it was gone. The Moors restaurant leveled the hill and put in a parking lot.

In summer 1969, Sue Lowe, Cookie Mueller, and I found a shack to stay in on Bradford, in the low-rent West End. It used to drive me crazy: I'd come back from work at the Toy Store, the shop I worked in, and the two of them would be drinking jug wine and giving each other tattoos. Sue was a drunk, Cookie took lots of drugs:

an equal opportunity consciousness. We were all high on something, and wrecked. MDA and quaaludes! The speed years! I remember going to bed late at night and taking a "black beauty" so I'd get awake. I remember John delivering "black beauties" on his bicycle. (After some years, John had a car; the rest of us were still on bicycles.)

I remember on acid going out to Long Nook Beach. I could stand on the cliff, lean into the wind, and not fall. And the A-House! When I first came to town I was under age. I hung out in the alleyway desperate to be older. Sometimes they'd take pity on me and let me in for a Coke. When I was 21, I had a beer at the A-House. It was a momentous occasion.

Sue left town, Cookie and I stayed. We had a pet, Hans the clam. I got hepatitis, which I always attribute to bad shellfish, the little clams we'd pick. I got quite ill, and Cookie had to take care of me.

In the summer of 1970, John and I had a big apartment on Franklin St. That's when Vincent Peranio came up from Baltimore and stayed on. We had a torrid love affair, and it was my first experience playing house. We had a wonderful Thanksgiving dinner, and I made a heartshaped cake. Sappy! We were so poor we had to give up cigarettes. In winter, we took LSD and walked on the dunes. There was no sliding, the sand was frozen solid.

Divine had a thrift shop, the town closed it, and we had a hearing at Town Hall. I spoke up for the shop: "We need stores like this in town for people like me."

I'd worked at the Inn at The Mews as a hostess. That winter, I worked in the schools as a library aid, in mini-skirts and high heels. The teachers were horrified, but the kids laughed. And I thought I looked beautiful. That's what Vincent told me.

It was a tumultuous relationship. Vincent had a deaf dalmatian named Pete that hated me because I'd usurped his place in bed. Then Vincent was planning to leave for Christmas. I said, "You can't leave!" Then he would not have a tree, and he would not play Christmas songs on his accordion.

Winter in Provincetown? I remember the harbor freezing. There was nothing to do except drive into Orleans for a second- or third-run movie. Social life consisted of the Fo'csle, maybe a few more bars, and it centered on alcohol. I've never been much of a drinker. When the weather got warm, Vincent and I both ended it. I left Provincetown in the summer of 1971. I didn't live there again, just came for a few days, a week, through the '70s. I had a summer there in 1981, when I had time to do it. But I haven't been back to Provincetown since 1988, almost 10 years.

I do remember walking around town handing out flyers for *Multiple Maniacs* and *Mondo Trasho*. Were we movie stars in Provincetown? Before *Pink Flamingos*, we were completely taken for granted. We were the next-door-neighbors, the people who worked in shops.



SUSAN LOWE, 1970S PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

SUSAN LOWE

Susan Lowe came to Baltimore in 1966 to study at the Maryland Institute College of Art as a 17-year-old, and soon met Divine, Howard Gruber, Van Smith. "I became a fag hag and fell into things: nudity, drinking, pot, and sex. Fun!" Her infamous attempt to hitchhike to P'town with Mink Stole and Cookie Mueller is immortalized in Mueller's essay, "Abduction and Rape-Highway 31, Elkton, Maryland, 1969," in the 1997 posthumous collection, *Ask Dr. Mueller* (High Risk Books, reviewed in this issue).

I met the very cool, quasi-punky Sue Lowe when I visited Baltimore, and we ate dinner with Bonnie Pearce in a cheapo Asian restaurant. Our interview was by phone weeks later. Interestingly, Lowe was cautious about implicating others in her wild adventures of the '60s and '70s, taking the blame herself for any indiscretions. Simply, she was a hopeless alcoholic then, out-of-control. "I was crazy, or having kids," she said.

Lowe has been one of Waters's people forever, as much for her off-screen friendships and Dreamlander nightclub acts as for his movies. She took small roles in his films, but her one substantial role is among the best-remembered WaMole McHenry, in *Desperate Living* (1977). (Her part, I assume, is a splendid homage to duck-tailed, leather-jacketed, Mercedes McCambridge in Orson Welles's *Touch of Evil*.) "Sue's so convincing," Waters told me, "that people always assume she's that butch role in real life."

Not at all. Lowe has long given up liquor, but, these days, she's got piles of boyfriends. She's also a university art teacher, finishing an erudite master's degree, and an extremely accomplished painter. She's represented in Provincetown by the Bangs Street Gallery.

...

In summer 1969, Mink, Cookie, and I hitched to P'town. We got a little house off Bradford Street, and I got a job at the fish factory. I was like a bum, hanging out with Howard Gruber, David Lochary, and Divine, and playing canasta. That was me on a calmer day. I was very drunk all the time, hardly ever dressed, crazy, hustling customers in the bars for drinks.

All the businesses went to Town Hall to complain about me, that's what I remember. Town Hall people came to my door and told me I disrupted the town. So I decided to hitch home. I ended up in Pittsburgh on a fishing trip, where these guys were going to rape me. Then I met these hippies, we tripped all night, and they gave me a ticket back to Baltimore. Then John Liesenring and I hitched to New Mexico to live on a hippie farm. After a month, we hitched back to Baltimore. I was tired of traveling, and I was 18!

The next year, I was on the rebound. I was modeling at the Maryland Art Institute, seduced this drawing teacher. We went to Ireland, got married, and I got pregnant. The next year, we were in Provincetown. My husband (we were married for seven years, two children) was building houses. He built one in Truro. I worked at Town Hall, selling 250th Anniversary tchotchkes. Nobody noticed it was me back in town again. I didn't do much drinking: "It's time for cocktails and a bike ride."

I had children! Then my husband left me when the youngest was three. I was on welfare. I always had boyfriends and girlfriends, and I was back in P'town in 1976-77. I had a biker boyfriend, Kenny Orye, who played "Eater" in *Desperate Living*. He owned a bar in Baltimore's Fell's Point, used to run guns to Ireland. Everybody in P'town loved him. He was funny, and we were all crazy and dysfunctional. He played guitar, sometimes sat in on my band. He died about 10 years ago of substance abuse.

I had a cabaret review, the BB Steel Revue and the Fabulous Stilettos. We played Max's and CBGB's in New York, and they loved us in P'town. I was the lead singer, Cookie and Sharon Niesp were backups. Also, Edith Massey played with us, and she did "Fever," "Over the Rainbow," and "Rhinestone Cowgirls."

Edith came to P'town twice. Howard Gruber treated us to dinner at Front Street and Edith couldn't get over the gourmet food. She couldn't eat. She wanted chicken wings, or something like that. The Back Room gave me and Edith a room for free and a bar tab. They gave *me* a tab! Edith was mean when she got drunk, so she knew she shouldn't drink.

She wouldn't have been comfortable staying in P'town. She liked her little Baltimore shop. I traveled with her in the car from Baltimore to P'town and, let me tell you, she never was quiet! She'd count Volkswagens out loud.

In 1976, when I played the Back Room, they thought I was a drag queen. I'd tell them I was. I had a flamenco gown, red and glittery, and I'd do birdcalls. That's how I'd open up. I'd do Tina Turner songs, then rip off my clothes, and be there in a mini-skirt.

Though I'd started out in art school, in those days in P'town, I was more interested in being a movie star and being connected with theater people. I knew where the galleries were, but that's it. If we saw Robert Motherwell, we couldn't care less.

After the end of a second marriage, I've learned to live with myself. And I'm long sober. In summer 1996, I was in P'town for three weeks because the Bangs Street Gallery was including me in a group show. John was going up, Dennis Dermody was going up, and I had the best time. I stayed with Chan, whom I love, who bought some land and turned it into a circle of cottages. Now, P'town is mostly a relax place: hang out and enjoy the water. Being with John, we always get a place in a restaurant. Everybody knows who we are.

But P'town has changed a lot. It's been built up. I miss the Fo'c'sle. I was a Fo'c'sle hag! Growing up Catholic, I miss the Blessing of the Fleet. They don't have it any more. No more ritual. And I rode by Front Street and said "Hi" to it in my memory, but I didn't go in.

SHARON NIESP

In the early '70s, before they lived together, Cookie Mueller had a house on Railroad Avenue, and Sharon Niesp would visit. Gregory Corso would come by for breakfast after stopping at a liquor store for a bottle of Flame Tokay. One time, quite early in the morning, Niesp was sitting at the kitchen table, wearing men's silk pajamas that Cookie had bought in a thrift store. She had left her bridge upstairs. John Waters materialized. "John loves to say that the first time he met me, I sat there 'glowering at him with

no teeth." She lived yearround in Provincetown until 1976 when she and Mueller moved to New York.

Niesp had already met Waters in 1972 when she performed in a production of the Provincetown Theater Company, *The Killing of Sister George*. After the play, so effective was her acting, Waters said, "You know, Sharon, I didn't recognize you for the first 10 minutes." He asked her to be in his next movie, *Desperate Living*, and in those years, making a movie meant she would go to Baltimore and live with the group for weeks. "Seeing the cast out of character, and then in character in the movie, sometimes there was very little difference!" Other roles followed in *Polyester*, *Hairspray*, *Cry-Baby*, and *Serial Mom*. As the films got bigger, her roles got smaller. "I'm not union. I just don't click that way. I'm too busy dealing with life-in-general."

VINCENT PERANIO

It feels like Poe's Baltimore, that tiny alley with abandoned, decrepit homes in the Fell's Point area. Here Vincent Peranio, John Waters's perennial art designer, lives with his wife, Dolores Deluxe. But what a property! Behind their ginger-bread sized house is a gothic castle's worth of dark gardens, hidden staircases, deserted buildings, all of which Vincent and Dolores plan to reconstruct. Their enthusiastic tour is alone worth a visit to Baltimore.

"I met John in Fell's Point," Peranio said. "Susan Lowe brought him into our house, which housed Maryland Institute of Art students and Johns Hopkins students, and we all hit it off. At one point, I lived with David, John, Cookie, and Mink at one time. I was an artist, and liked all kinds of people."

Peranio is the designer for the Baltimore-shot TV series, *Homicide*. But his greatest achievement was designing *Pink Flamingos* on a \$200 budget. The legendary film title was inspired by the plastic lawn ornaments which Peranio decided to put into a shot. "*Pink Flamingos* is the only work of art of mine which has shown at the Museum of Modern Art," he said.

Deluxe, who was art director of *Polyester*, admitted, "I missed the Provincetown thing," though she traveled with her friend Cookie Mueller to a California commune. "But Vincent took me there on a nostalgic trip. I remember going to the Café Blase. And I was surprised about how much more beautiful things were in P'town then I had imagined."

...

John came back to Baltimore with stories about how wonderful P'town was, how crazy. "You'd love it as an artist," he told me. I visited once, and then had an affair with Mink, between *Multiple Maniacs* and *Pink Flamingos*. That had to be '70-71. I'd missed the summer madness and moved to P'town in October. We stayed with



SHARON NIESP AND JOHN WATERS AT CAPT JACK'S WHARE, PROVINCETOWN, 1993
PHOTO: BRUCE FULLER

Cookie and Sue Lowe, who were roommates, on Bradford Street. Divine lived three doors up with Howard Gruber. They had a big house and threw big parties. Divine worked in a gourmet kitchen shop, and had the best kitchen in town. He stole like crazy from these people, for his fiestas.

Mink was a high-school secretary and dressed like *Pink Flamingos*' Connie Marble: the cat-eyed glasses, the high heels. It says something about P'town that they hired her.

There were a million leather shops at the time, and I started working in one opened by Gus Gutterman on Commercial Street. I made belts, though I didn't have a traditional leather upbringing. I stayed on for several years, including winters. My apartment was \$75 a month, year round. Thank God for food stamps, which they passed out Labor Day. We needed them, we were so poor. With food stamps, Divine had a fabulous party, and Mink made a steak. Divine cried. He hadn't seen a steak in so long! Our Christmas tree was a scrub branch from the dunes. The decoration was Mink's and Divine's clip-on 1950s jewelry.

There's no bleakness like P'town winter bleakness. I can recall: way down in the distance on Commercial Street, there'd be a little dark figure walking towards me, and then he'd turn off! One winter, we were so bored we did backup for these poor guys in a band. I guess they were desperate. My other memory is tripping on the dunes, which was a gas! I remember a wonderful February: LSD stops the cold.

Mostly, we'd go dancing at Piggy's, and also pick everybody up. This was before AIDS, and the worst fear was gonorrhea. There was a Puritan law of no dancing on Sundays. At midnight Saturday, there was music but no dancing. On Sundays, dancing started at midnight. We were avid dancers, and this may be the first time a lot of crazy outsiders spent the winter. We went to a town meeting and voted out this 200-year-old law. We outvoted the townies, and that's my great legacy to P'town: let them dance any night of the week!

Mink was a star, especially in P'town. She had this long scarf and did an Isadora Duncan: her scarf got caught in the spokes of her bike. Mink and I had a rather torrid, story-book romance. After we would scream in the streets. She'd come into a coffee house and say, "I wish I could have a child named Vincent and kill it." How can you break up in P'town and not see each other? I moved for a month into a tent.

I bought a '54 station wagon, and drove it back to Baltimore to do *Pink Flamingos*. In traffic, the brakes failed, and I crashed through cement steps. I was instantly in debt for damaging property. I've been pretty much encased in Baltimore since, including paying off that debt, though I hold P'town dear in my heart.

CHANNING WILROY

Channing Wilroy is the only Dreamlander who still lives in Provincetown. In 1979, he bought a cottage colony on Pearl Street, between Henry Hensche's and the Fine Arts Work Center. He fixed it up, and rents it out. I was on P'town radio, playing '50s R&B on WOMR. 'The Night Train,' that was me. And I make telephone art."

Originally, he was a teen TV star in Baltimore, dancing rock'n'roll for three years on the legendary *Buddy Dean Show*. The prototype of Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*, the program provided the inspiration, and chief setting, for John Waters's 1988 rock comedy, *Hairspray*.

In a way, Wilroy was the first celebrity to appear in a Waters movie. Waters had admired him jitterbugging on TV. "I never auditioned for *Pink Flamingos*," he said. "John asked me if I wanted to be in it. I played the Marbles's chauffeur-impregnator. In *Female Trouble*, I played the prosecutor who sends Fatso to the electric chair. In *Desperate Living* I played the Captain of the Queens Goon Squad. And I was music coordinator for *Cry-Baby*, using my 1950s R&B records."

He laughed when asked to comment on the capabilities of Waters's friends/actors in the films.



CHANNING WILROY IN *PINK FLAMINGOS*, 1972
PHOTO: LAWRENCE IRVINE, NEW LINE CINEMA

"Some are better than others," he said, "but the fact that some suck adds character. We've got to give credit to Divine and Mink as the best. Otherwise, I really don't know how to judge. I do know I've gotten a lot of feedback. And we must have done something right if *Pink Flamingos* is around after 25 years."

...

I came to Provincetown in 1966 with Pat Moran and her husband at the time. John was here, and we'd all known each other from Baltimore. P'town is where we got to be very good friends. I'd been coming to summer resorts to work, but I thought that P'town was an unusual place. My summer season got longer and longer, and I decided to stay. I've been living permanently in P'town since 1969.

In 1969, 1970, and 1971, I lived with Divine, and there was never a dull moment. He pulled a number of capers, and we always had to move because there was no rent money. We lived with George Tamsitt, also from Baltimore. I don't know which of them, George or Divine, was more full of shit, and pulled the wool more over the other's eyes.

You've heard about when Divine auctioned off all his furniture? His landlady was Carey Seamen, a lawyer-real estate agent, quite old with lots of money and cheaper than shit. Divine was no longer here when the warrant was issued, but it lasted for seven years!

Divine ran a thrift shop, Divine Trash, on Bradford Street. Downstairs was the Penny Farthing Restaurant. He worked in his store and sold old clothing, china, bric-a-brac, collectibles. Some of the stuff came from the Truro dump. But he got in trouble because he didn't have a permit for a shop. Cookie Mueller was living with us at the time. That was the year she got pregnant, and had Max.

I was a chef at the Inn at The Mews in 1969 and 1970. Then I owned my own restaurant, Channings, where The Commons is today. Then

I went back to manage The Mews. David Lochary lived with me in 1975, when I had my restaurant. How would he spend his day? Picking out his outfits for the evening, or sitting in front of a makeup mirror wondering how he should present himself.

David was doing lots of LSD. We all were. David reveled in it more than the rest of us. Also, he was a star, and liked to be treated as such. He went to New York and died, most likely an angel dust casualty. And he was drinking. He was still alive when found in his apartment. He had fallen on a glass and cut himself.

I go back to Baltimore occasionally and visit, but those great days in P'town are a while ago. They're becoming a blur.

DENNIS DERMODY

Dennis Dermody is John Waters's best male friend, and he's not from Baltimore. "I was appropriated by the Baltimore people," he told me, when we talked on the phone. In the '70s, he met the Dreamlanders one by one when he lived in P'town. Since, he's been to Baltimore as a house guest many times, and he lived there during the 1980 shooting of *Polyester*. He assumed the management of Pat Moran's Charles Theater so that she could work on the movie. A long-time New Yorker who doesn't drive, Dermody took a bus to work every day in Baltimore. Also, he was on the *Polyester* set for key days of shooting, like when 400-pound Jean Hill bit a bus tire. He even appeared in one shot (his only appearance in a Waters movie): "I'm the last pervert coming out of the theater showing the film, *My Burning Bush*," he says proudly.

The one-time off-off-Broadway ticket-taker met Willem Dafoe through the Wooster Group, and Dermody started his long-held job as nanny for Dafoe's son, Jack. He's also Senior Editor and, for 10 years, film critic, for the spunky New York-based magazine, *Paper*. Dermody's movie reviews are knowledgeable, irreverent, genuinely hilarious, and share Waters's adoration of the absurd and bizarre. One, about a Provincetown movie theater, "What Time Does the Midnight Movie Start," appears in this section.

...

I was working in Connecticut with retarded children, and I decided, "I've got to get out of here!" I came for the summer to P'town in 1972, and was there outside of John's opening of *Pink Flamingos*. The actors arrived in cabs! I went to the theater that week and saw it, and said, "Thank God, there are people as fucked-up as I am."

I met Cookie first, and she said, "Let's make a date to go to the movies." When I went over there, she was in the kitchen peeling potatoes, and her son, Max, was sobbing. "Potatoes are my friends," she said. "Max loves potatoes."

The movie we saw was *Executive Action*, and we got friendly. Cookie said to me, "You've got the same crap on the wall as John, you've got to meet him." She meant horror posters, similar



JOHN WATERS AND DENNIS DERMODY, EARLY '70S
COLLECTION OF DENNIS DERMODY

kinds of books and artifacts. We read the same books: Grove Press publications: *The Naked Lunch*, John Rechy's *City of Night*. There was a murder in town that summer, a woman was found without hands. John got it into his head that I had the hands. He'd bug me, "I know you've got the hands. Show me! I'll give you \$25!"

I worked in a record store, then I started spinning records at Piggy's, and it was really bizarre. You had two turntables, you weren't in a booth, and people literally would come up and rip records out of your hands. But you could mix anything. I remember on some JFK memorial day I played a John Kennedy speech, and then Junior Walker's "Shotgun" could be heard coming up in the background. People laughed!

I saw David Lochary at Piggy's, and he had a cool way of dancing. He had a great look: the Hawaiian shirts, the beard, the white-bleached hair. He cut quite a figure. We were in a play together, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*. I was Henderson, the axe-murderer, with one line: "Yes!" David was the all-American gentleman caller! Can you imagine! Actually, David did lots of theater, and he was inimitable on stage, with his special charm.

I worked at The Movies, and eventually, for about five years, I was the manager. It was funky fun—old films, art films—and we'd yell at the customers. We showed *Pink Flamingos* and *Desperate Living* at midnight. I was always obsessive about movies. I'd hitch into Boston, see four movies, then hitch back. I remember one winter when we all went into Boston to see Robert Altman's *Thieves Like Us*.

I became close to John, and we corresponded in the winters. I was in Provincetown from 1972-1981, almost 10 years year-round. I'm glad that actor Ron Vawter dragged me out of there.

Otherwise, I'd be a 400-pound alcoholic at the Old Colony. I remember a showing of a video of John Huston's *The Bible* at the Governor Bradford. The bartender said, with no irony, "The book was so much better." I thought, "I've got to leave!"

In New York, I lived with Mink Stole for a little while. That didn't work out. I love her, but not as a roommate! I was screaming for her when she won \$15,000 on TV on *Scrabble*, appearing three days under her real name, Nancy Stole. She is fabulous!

I've known John for more than 20 years. I go to his house in Baltimore for Christmas, and, in the summer, we drive to P'town together. What do I do there now? Go to a disco? I'm 50! I never went to the beach. I do have friends there, but they are "reclusive," to put it mildly.

PAT MORAN

She's tiny, tough, and Jeanne Moreau-good looking. I talked to Pat Moran on Baltimore's waterfront, in the production offices of TV's *Homicide*, for which Moran is casting director. Before that, she ran Baltimore's premiere arthouse, the Charles Theater. She's also John Waters' three-decade very best friend, and confidante, and right-hand/left-hand person on the set of every one of his films. "My Siamese twin," he calls her.

"John and I have been hanging out for more than 30 years, and we talk *constantly*," she told me. "If he's on his way to New York, I'll call to make sure he gets there. Or he'll call me and leave a message that he's arrived. And after being together so many years, I know when he walks in the door that it's him!"

Moran is tremendously smart, and down-to-earth, and remains a '60s political outsider from the left. Before we discussed Provincetown, Moran railed articulately against American government policy, then we talked old movies. She's an expert, adoring Bette Davis especially, and making me promise to see a French film called *Baxter* about a murderous dog.

...

Why did I first go to P'town? Have you been in Baltimore in the summer with the humidity? It's like living in the Mekong Delta. But in those days, the '60s, people were footloose and fancy-free. Times were different, and you could pack up a car and take off. P'town was reasonable enough to work and live there. The guy I was with there first had a job as a bartender at the Provincetown Inn.

In later years, after I had kids, we'd vacation there for two or three weeks. It's the greatest place in the world for kids, who can run around and everybody looks out for them. I have two, one is 29, the other 24, and we started to bring my oldest son when he was six. I went there



PAT MORAN AND JOHN WATERS, FRONT STREET, EARLY '80S PHOTO ROGER YEATON

always with Chuck, who's been my husband for 26 years. He's a contractor who has nothing to do with the movies.

We never shared an apartment with John, Mink, and the Baltimore gang. My husband would find us a place in the East End. Or we'd stay with Howard Gruber, or a lot of the time we'd stay at Poor Richard's Landing, which was perfect for my family. It was almost all gay people except for us. Poor Richard's had no sign, so you'd have to swing a gate. But when you're in there, you can sit in back and watch 20,000 million stars. What's the sense of P'town if you can't be right on the water? And why would you need to go to Truro? If you'd been to Poor Richard's before they filled in underneath, it was just great.

John and I have had an odd relationship with the scripts. Even though I always kind of knew what they were about in P'town, and when he was on to something, I didn't ask him what he was writing. Even today, I don't ask him.

If John is working on a screenplay, I won't talk to him from 7:00 in the morning until 12:00. Then I'll give him a few minutes until maybe 12:30. In P'town, I was always an early riser. If John was writing, I was walking up and down, looking out my window, maybe heading down to the Portuguese bakery. My husband might go shop at the fish market. Then we'd all meet up at the beach, usually off of the Landing.

On a typical day, we'd actually sit in the sun, though with 500 newspapers and maybe a trashy book, some great summer read. It was also great when a news story would break. Everyone would have an opinion, a big deal.

Sometimes, people would want to go off to Race Point, which was too athletic for me. And why would I want to go dancing? Why the hell was I at the beach?

For dinner, Chuck would cook sometimes, or maybe we'd go out, though in those days it took forever to dress, to finally see Howard at Front Street, his restaurant. Chan Wilroy was

cooking at the time, and Dennis Dermody would meet us there after he got off work at The Movies. After Front Street, we'd sit on The Benches gabbing, or we'd walk up to Spiritus. Or five or six kids would go up to Spiritus alone, even if it was 10:00, and get a pizza. Or there were three movie theaters we could go to.

And we'd do the same thing the next day. Basically, the day was busy doing nothing. It was getting used to doing nothing in a place that was great to do it.

Well, the best day to me was the parade: magical! One float was with local firemen, another float was with Jimmy James, who looked more like Marilyn Monroe than any man ever did. That day we'd have a big lobster cookout, often at Dennis's.

The best thing, though not to John, was that there was no telephone. It would take a few days to get used to it. But for John it was, "Jees, I've got to walk up to Bryant's!" He'd walk there five times a day, to that phone booth, and try to get his shows together.

When *Homicide* was born, I stopped going to P'town. I haven't been there in the last four years. But if I could figure out how to be in P'town from May to October and Baltimore from October through March, that would be happiness.

It's almost as if P'town isn't part of America. It's not harsh: it's a place where John, a non-athletic person and a sports bigot, rides a bicycle. ■

Gerald Peary is a film columnist and critic at the Boston Phoenix. He is a professor of film and journalism at Suffolk University and teaches film studies at Boston University.

What Time Does the Midnight Movie Start?

BY DENNIS DERMODY

A funny thing happened the other day at the movies—the film broke, the frame jerked to a halt and the image caught fire, melting like a bubbling celluloid rose. Of course, the audience jumped to its feet, irate and screaming (as if the projectionist could hear them through the soundproof walls), but their aggravated cries brought me back to a time when I managed a movie theater on Cape Cod, where that angry din, shouted out nightly, was music to my ears.

It was a small repertoire cinema in Provincetown, simply called “The Movies.” Located on the very tip of the scorpion tail of Cape Cod, it’s the first place the Pilgrims landed before Plymouth Rock, but they actually only stopped long enough to do their laundry and steal the Indians’ corn, so it doesn’t really count. A small fishing village that is annually transformed into a swinging summer resort, Provincetown has always drawn a bohemian crowd—Eugene O’Neill, Tennessee Williams, and countless others were lured by its rustic charm—and there has always been an uneasy alliance between the Portuguese community and the large gay crowd that summer there. “Fisherman, fags, and fudge,” a friend once joked, was the essence of Provincetown. I vividly remember my first drive down Commercial Street (the main drag): when I got an eyeful of the crackpots careening back and forth on the sidewalk, I knew it was the place for me.

At the time, there were three movie theaters in town. “The Movies” was the smallest and the funkiest. It was actually the balcony of what was once a huge movie palace, but the downstairs now housed a warehouse of shops. All that was left of the grand old theater was a 100-seat cramped death trap up two flights of stairs. Advertised as “Air-Cooled!”, there was just one dangerous, noisy fan on the roof that I always feared would fall down. It was hot as blazes, and on particularly steamy nights, people would stumble down the stairs hyperventilating, drenched in sweat. “I lost 10 pounds during that Bergman movie,” one woman announced to me as she left, stripped down to her bra and panties. The projectors, two antiquated dinosaurs, were forever breaking down. “The Movies” specialized in foreign and cult films, which meant that while the other theaters were packing them in with *Jaws 2*, we were herding those poor souls into that sweltering attic to see, appropriately, *The Damned*.

And then there were the seats. We had appropriated them from a theater down the Cape



DAVID LOCHARY AND COOKIE MUELLER IN FRONT OF THE MOVIES, PLAYING PINK FLAMINGOS
PHOTO DENNIS DERMODY

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1997

Exhibition Schedule

Group Exhibition Gallery Artists
May 23 - June 8th

Candy Jernigan
June 10 - June 22

Hermine Ford, Robert Moskowitz, Jack Tworok
June 24 - July 6th

Janice Redman / Nick Lawrence
July 8 - July 20

Jennifer Ditacchio
July 22 - August 3

Bert Yarborough
August 5 - August 17

Amy Kandall
August 19 - August 31

Group Exhibition
September 16 - September 14

Richard Liebermann
September 16 - September 28

Jeri Coppola
September 30 - October 12

Image: Janice Redman "Untitled" cotton and silverware

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that had gone out of business and had riveted them down in a rather haphazard fashion—they were forever collapsing. I would shudder every time I tore the ticket of an overweight person. The ticket seller and I would take bets on how long before we heard the inevitable crash and howl of pain coming from the theater. One extremely huge gentleman was wedged in so tight it took three of us and a crowbar to get him out.

I worked my way up from janitor to manager in no time—no one else was stupid enough to take that thankless, low-paying job. So I set out to hire the perfect staff. I not only hired the handicapped, I made a point of *only* hiring alcoholics, drug addicts, the mentally unstable and children who smoked. If they were funny, they got a job. We hired a lovely girl to sell tickets who was born physically disabled from Thalidomide. I then proceeded to create a manifesto of how we would all work there. Our creed: "One: The customer is never right. And two: If anything goes wrong, just leave the theater." Many a time I sat at a charming outdoor cafe listening to the angry cries of disgruntled movie patrons echoing in the distance. Now, anyone who has ever worked with the public knows how fast the milk of human kindness can sour. Most people spend their whole lives empowered by others—their bosses, their spouses, the government, etc. They are filled with frustration and rage that seems satisfied only when they can yell at people who are hired to serve them—waiters, salespersons, hotel staff, or people who work in movie theaters. They bully and argue and demand to see the manager when things go wrong (and at our theater, that was nightly). Well, we made it our policy never to give them that kind of satisfaction. When they screamed for the manager, I would appear at the top of the stairs, drink in hand, and announce: "I'm the manager—and fuck you!"

Why were we allowed to get away with this, you ask? Simple. The man who owned the theater was so high on cocaine at all times, he was just grateful we turned in the money every night. And the surprising thing was that the theater was very popular. Every evening the air was giddy with suspense and morbid anticipation. And the staff was so scary it made for an interesting night out.

Our projectionist had a bit of a drug problem so you never knew what was going to happen. One night I stepped from my manager's office/cocktail lounge to find, for some reason, *Children of Paradise* being projected on the ceiling. (What astonished me was that the audience was patiently leaning way back in their seats, just taking it for granted they should be reading subtitles over the exit sign.) Once, during *Gone with the Wind*, I poked my head in to see the burning of Atlanta on the screen and, relieved that everything was running smoothly, I started to descend the stairs when I suddenly heard peals of laughter coming from the audience. I rushed back upstairs to see all these Jews up on screen dancing merrily around a fire—the projectionist had somehow confused a reel of *Fiddler on the Roof* which was playing later in the week.

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July 7 - July 19 Rodgers and Hammerstein's **CAROUSEL** America's beloved musical! Featuring musical favorites *If I Loved You*, *You'll Never Walk Alone* and *June Is Bustin' Out All Over*.

July 21 - Aug. 2 **GRACE AND GLORIE** by Tom Zeigler Pat Carroll (*Nonsense I and II*) and **BONNIE FRANKLIN** (*One Day At A Time*) explore communication between the generations.

Aug. 4 - Aug. 16 **AFTER PLAY** by Anne Meara Hilarious comedy with **JERRY STILLER** (*Seinfeld*), **ANNE MEARA** (*All My Children*) and MGM film legend **JANE POWELL**, who star in this funny, moving and unusually entertaining comedy.

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I took a hands-on approach to dealing with unruly customers. One little 10-year-old brat who lived in town used to terrorize the theater. He'd run wild and make a lot of noise until one day I cornered him during a "Kiddie Matinee," picked him up by the neck and throttled him, his little arms and legs thrashing wildly and his tongue bulging out of his head. He was an angel for weeks afterwards. His mother even sent me a thank-you box of saltwater taffy. There were occasional wackos—a Vietnam vet went berserk during a screening of *Apocalypse Now*, and a rather inebriated young man actually urinated on the screen during *A Clockwork Orange* (take that, Stanley Kubrick!)—but these incidents livened up a dull week. I only "lost it" when we showed Franco Zeffirelli's ghastly *Brother Sam*, *Sister Moon*, his saccharine telling of the story of St. Francis, complete with music by Donovan. The hippie dogs and crystal-wearing fools who levitated up the stairs smiling beatifically drove me to jam pencils into the projector just so I could hear the disappointed groans from the audience when the film broke. An entire summer of stupid questions, like "What time does the midnight movie start?" and "Will I like this movie?" began to take its toll on all of us. Audience members joined the anarchy—I would come in the next day to find the letters on the marquee rearranged to say: *The Homo's Ass* at eight, 10 and 12.

But these were wonderful times. There was the sweet thrill of coming to work on nights that we showed Bertolucci's *The Conformist*, Altman's *Thieves Like Us*, Mallick's *Badlands* or Cocteau's *Orpheus*. Just sitting at the top of those stairs, basking in those images—while the audience used their movie schedules as makeshift fans—was so wonderful on those humid, airless nights. So what if the ticket taker had passed out and was slumped over the counter, or the concession stand boy was sneaking his friends up the back exit or the projectionist was speaking in tongues and had his clothes on backwards. There was magic in the air.

The theater's been closed for some time now. It's used as storage space for the shops downstairs. I went back last summer, and it was so sad and strange to see it all cobwebbed and stripped of seats and screen. It really was *The Last Picture Show*. Provincetown is also a bit like *The Land That Time Forgot*. As I was walking down Commercial Street, a woman came up to me and said in complete seriousness: "Are you still working at The Movies?" I was a bit taken aback, considering the place has been boarded up for over nine years, but shot back at her, "Yeah, *Harold and Maude* is playing tonight at eight and 10." "Oh, great," she said, nodding to herself, "I love that movie—I'll see you there." "See you there," I said, and we moved off in opposite directions, dazed by the sun, both of us stuck permanently in the middle of some cracked dream. ■

Dennis Dermody's profile appears on page 31.

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The Zero-Moment Point

BY SEBASTIAN JUNGER

Whether the *Andrea Gail* rolls, pitch-poles, or gets driven down, she winds up, one way or another, in a position from which she cannot recover. Among marine architects this is known as the zero-moment point—the point of no return. The transition from crisis to catastrophe is fast, probably under a minute, or someone would've tripped the EPIRB. (In fact the EPIRB doesn't even signal when it hits the water, which means it has somehow malfunctioned. In the vast majority of cases, the Coast Guard knows when men are dying off shore.) There's no time to put on survival suits or grab a life vest; the boat's moving through the most extreme motion in her life and there isn't even time to shout. The refrigerator comes out of the wall and crashes across the galley. Dirty dishes cascade out of the sink. The T.V., the washing machine, the VCR tapes, the men, all go flying. And, seconds later, the water moves in.

When a boat floods, the first thing that happens is that her electrical system shorts out. The lights go off, and for a few moments the only illumination is the frenetic blue sparks arcing down into the water. It's said that people in extreme situations perceive things in distorted, almost surreal ways, and when the wires start to crackle and burn, perhaps one of the crew thinks of fireworks—of the last Fourth of July, walking around Gloucester with his girlfriend and watching colors blossom over the inner harbor. There'd be tourists shuffling down Rogers Street and fishermen hooting from bars and the smell of gunpowder and fried clams drifting through town. He would have his whole life ahead of him, that July evening; he'd have every choice in the world.

And he wound up swordfishing. He wound up, by one route or another, on this trip, in this storm, with this boat filling up with water and one or two minutes left to live. There's no going back now, no rescue helicopter that could possibly save him. All that's left is to hope it's over fast.

When the water first hits the trapped men, it's cold but not paralyzing, around 52 degrees, according to infrared photos taken from satellites. A man can survive up to four hours in that temperature if something holds him up. If the boat rolls or flips over, the men in the wheelhouse are the first to drown. Their experience is exactly like Hazard's except that they don't make it out of the wheelhouse to a life raft; they inhale and that's it. After that the water rises up the companionway, flooding the galley and berths, and then starts up the inverted engine room hatch. It may well be pouring in the aft door and the fish hatch, too, if either failed during the sinking. If the boat is hull-up and there are men in the engine room, they are the last to

die. They're in absolute darkness, under a landslide of tools and gear, the water rising up the companionway and the roar of the waves probably very muted through the hull. If the water takes long enough, they might attempt to escape on a lungful of air—down the companionway, along the hall, through the aft door and out from under the boat—but they don't make it. It's too far, they die trying. Or the water comes up so hard and fast that they can't even think. They're up to their waists and then their chests and then their chins and then there's no air at all. Just what's in their lungs, a minute's worth or so.

The instinct not to breathe underwater is so strong that it overcomes the agony of running out of air. No matter how desperate the drowning person is, he doesn't inhale until he's on the verge of losing consciousness. At that point there's so much carbon dioxide in the blood, and so little oxygen, that chemical sensors in the brain trigger an involuntary breath whether he's underwater or not. That is called the "break point"; laboratory experiments have shown the break point to come after 87 seconds. It's a sort of neurological optimism, as if the body were saying, *Holding our breath is killing us, and breathing in might not kill us, so we might as well breathe in.* If the person hyperventilates first—as free divers do, and as a frantic person might—the break point comes as late as 140 seconds. Hyperventilation initially flushes carbon dioxide out of the system, so it takes that much longer to climb back up to critical levels.

Until the break point, a drowning person is said to be undergoing "voluntary apnea," choosing not to breathe. Lack of oxygen to the brain causes a sensation of darkness closing in from all sides, as in a camera aperture stopping down. The panic of a drowning person is mixed with an odd incredulity that this is actually happening. Having never done it before, the body—and the mind—do not know how to die gracefully. The process is filled with desperation and awkwardness. "So *this* is drowning," a drowning person might think. "So *this* is how my life finally ends."

Along with the disbelief is an overwhelming sense of being wrenched from life at the most banal, inopportune moment imaginable. "I can't die, I have tickets to next week's game," is not an impossible thought for someone who is drowning. The drowning person may even feel embarrassed, as if he's squandered a great fortune. He has an image of people shaking their heads over his dying so senselessly. The drowning person may feel as if it's the last, greatest act of stupidity in his life.



These thoughts shriek through the mind during the minute or so that it takes a panicked person to run out of air. When the first involuntary breath occurs most people are still conscious, which is unfortunate, because the only thing more unpleasant than running out of air is breathing in water. At that point the person goes from voluntary to involuntary apnea, and the drowning begins in earnest. A spasmodic breath drags water into the mouth and windpipe, and then one of two things happen. In about 10 percent of people, water—anything—touching the vocal cords triggers an immediate contraction in the muscles around the larynx. In effect, the central nervous system judges something in the voice box to be more of a threat than low oxygen levels in the blood, and acts accordingly. This is called a laryngospasm. It's so powerful that it overcomes the breathing reflex and eventually suffocates the person. A person with laryngospasm drowns without any water in his lungs.

In the other 90 percent of people, water floods the lungs and ends any planned transfer of oxygen to the blood. The clock is running down now; half-conscious and enfeebled by oxygen depletion, the person is in no position to fight his way back up to the surface. The very process of drowning makes it harder and harder not to drown, an exponential disaster curve similar to that of a sinking boat. Occasionally someone makes it back from this dark world, though, and it's from these people that we know what drowning feels like. In 1892 a Scottish doctor named James Lowson was on a steamship bound for Colombo, Sri Lanka, when they ran into a typhoon and went down in the dead of night. Most of the 150 people on board sank with the ship, but Lowson managed to fight his way out of the hold and over the side. The ship sank out from under his feet, dragging him down, and the last thing he remembers is losing consciousness underwater. A few minutes later the buoyancy of his life vest shot him to the surface, though, and he washed up on an island and lived to write about his experiences in the *Edinburgh Medical Journal*. He attributed the clarity of recollection to the "preternatural calm" of people facing death. It's as close as one is going to get to the last moments of the *Andrea Gail*:

All afternoon the hammering of the big seas on the doomed vessel went on, whilst night came only to add darkness to our other horror. Shortly before 10 o'clock three tremendous seas found their way down the stoke-hole, putting out the fires, and our situation was desperate. The end came shortly before midnight, when there was a heavy crash on the reef, and the vessel was lying at the bottom of the Straits of Formosa in under a minute. With scarcely time to think I pulled down the life-belts and, throwing two to my companions, tied the third on myself and bolted for the companionway. There was no time to spare for studying humanity at this juncture, but I can never forget the apparent want of initiative in all I passed. All the passengers seemed paralyzed—even my companions, some of them able military men. The

stewards of the ship, uttering cries of despair and last farewells, blocked the entrance to the deck, and it was only by sheer force I was able to squeeze past them. Getting out on deck, a perfect mountain of water seemed to come from overhead, as well as from below, and dashed me against the bridge companionway. The ship was going down rapidly, and I was pulled down with her, struggling to extricate myself. I got clear under water and immediately struck out to reach the surface, only to go farther down. This exertion was a serious waste of breath, and after 10 or 15 seconds the effort of inspiration could no longer be restrained. It seemed as if I was in a vice which was gradually being screwed up tight until it felt as if the sternum and spinal column must break. Many years ago my old teacher used to describe how painless and easy death by drowning was—"like falling about in a green field in the early summer"—and this flashed across my brain at the time. The "gulping" efforts became less frequent, and the pressure seemed unbearable, but gradually the pain seemed to ease up. I appeared to be in a pleasant dream, although I had enough will power to think of friends at home and the sight of the Grampians, familiar to me as a boy, that was brought into my view. Before losing consciousness the chest pain had completely disappeared and the sensation was actually pleasant. When consciousness returned, I found myself at the surface, and managed to get a dozen good inspirations. Land was about 400 yards distant, and I used a bale of silk and then a long wooden plank to assist me to shore. On landing, and getting behind a sheltering rock, no effort was required to produce *copius emesis*. After the excitement, sound sleep set in and this sleep lasted three hours, when a profuse diarrhea came on, evidently brought on by the sea water ingested. Until morning broke all my muscles were in a constant tremor which could not be controlled. (Several weeks later) I was sleeping in a comfortable bed and, late in the evening, a nightmare led to my having a severe struggle with the bedroom furniture, finally taking a "header" out of the bed and coming to grief on the floor.

Lowson guesses that laryngospasm prevented water from entering his lungs when he was unconscious. The crew of the *Andrea Gail* either have laryngospasms or completely inundated lungs. They are suspended, open-eyed and unconscious, in the flooded enclosures of the boat. The darkness is absolute and the boat may already be on her way to the bottom. At this point only a massive amount of oxygen could save these men. They have suffered, at most, a minute or two. Their bodies, having imposed increasingly drastic measures to keep functioning, have finally started to shut down. Water in the lungs washes away a substance called surfactant, which enables the alveoli to leech oxygen out of the air. The alveoli themselves, grape-like clusters of membrane on the lung wall, collapse because blood cannot get through the

pulmonary artery. The artery has constricted in an effort to shunt blood to areas of the lungs where there is more oxygen. Unfortunately, those don't exist. The heart labors under critically low levels of oxygen and starts to beat erratically—"like a bag full of worms," as one doctor says. This is called ventricular fibrillation. The more irregularly the heart beats, the less blood it moves and the faster life functions decline. Children—who have proportionally stronger hearts than adults—can maintain a heartbeat for up to five minutes without air. Adults die faster. The heart beats less and less effectively until, after several minutes, there's no movement at all. Only the brain is alive.

The central nervous system does not know what has happened to the body; all it knows is that not enough oxygen is getting to the brain. Orders are still being issued—*Breathe! Pump! Circulate!*—that the body cannot obey. If the person were defibrillated at that moment, he might possibly survive. He could be given cardiopulmonary resuscitation, put on a respirator, and coaxed back to life. Still, the body is doing everything it can to delay the inevitable. When cold water touches the face, an impulse travels along the trigeminal nerve to the central nervous system and lowers the metabolic rate. The pulse slows down and the blood pools where it's needed most, in the heart and skull. It's a sort of temporary hibernation that drastically reduces the body's need for oxygen. Nurses will splash ice water on the face of a person with a racing heart to trigger the same reaction.

The diving reflex, as this is called, is compounded by the general effect of cold temperature on tissue—it preserves it. All chemical reactions, and metabolic processes, become honey-slow, and the brain can get by on less than half the oxygen it normally requires. There are cases of people spending forty or fifty minutes under lake ice and surviving. The colder the water, the stronger the diving reflex, the slower the metabolic processes, and the longer the survival time. The crew of the *Andrea Gail* do not find themselves in particularly cold water, though; it may add five or ten minutes to their lives. And there is no one around to save them anyway. The electrical activity in their brain gets weaker and weaker until, after 15 or 20 minutes, it ceases altogether.

The body could be likened to a crew that resorts to increasingly desperate measures to keep their vessel afloat. Eventually the last wire has shorted out, the last bit of decking has settled under the water. Tyne, Pierre, Sullivan, Moran, Murphy, and Shatford are dead. ■

Sebastian Junger is the author of the widely acclaimed The Perfect Storm (W.W. NORTON). This excerpt is reprinted with permission of the publisher.

PHOTO: SEBASTIAN JUNGER (RIGHT) DISCUSSING WITH ERIC WILLIAMS IN THE HULK OF THE BEACHCOMBERS, PROVINCETOWN, 1996

Art Is a Form of Tantric Sex:

Journals of Gregory Gillespie

SELECTION BY CHRISTOPHER BUSA

These writings look back on a distinguished career from the perspective of the recent past, when Gregory Gillespie began keeping a journal. His paintings have long been esteemed for their exquisite manner of combining the sacred and the profane. The poet John Yau wrote, "For Gillespie, who is both shameless and innocent in the way he makes visible our secret lives, the bodies of men and women are both holy and infernal, both pure and persecuted from within and without." Gillespie has a way of revealing the inside and the outside at the same time: the self and its double, side by side, bear an uncanny resemblance to each other. In his writing, Gillespie is candid about the lust, ambition, and anxiety that drive his painting. This summer he will teach a workshop in painting at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown.

11.1.94

For 30 years, I've been out of the loop; out of fashion. I've lived in a small rural town in Western Massachusetts. I hardly know anyone in New York City. So far, I've survived. Made a living of art. The rest of my life outside the studio is my wife, Peggy, my children, and some close friends. I'm in therapy and in couple's counseling. Mostly I paint, read the newspaper, cook once a week, shop, clean up the house when it's my turn on the chart, read, eat, and talk to my friends. That's about it. It's enough. Making art is the center.

I'm not a thinker about art; I hardly ever talk about it. I only talk about my own art. I'm happy to talk to whoever wants to talk with me about it. I just don't think much about other people's



GREGORY GILLESPIE, "THE COUPLE," OIL ON WOOD, 1996
COURTESY NIELSEN GALLERY

art. The movements have come and gone. I read about them sporadically in the art journals as I keep track once in a while of the Red Sox in the *Boston Globe*. I haven't liked much art since the Pop artists. Never liked Warhol, minimalists, conceptualists, op artists, installation art, post-modern. I've tried to like all of it. But I just want to look at paintings that are sensuous, delicious, and possess visual power as tremendous as the great art of the past.

It doesn't matter to me that I'm old fashioned. I know what turns me on and I trust that.

I will admit I want more recognition. I want a major museum show of my work. I suppose I

want more money. Part of me, ambitious and vain, thinks I'm making great art (oops!). At the same time, I thrive without all that. I've got enough; why want more? Maybe this is perfect. I get supported by my dealer (advances on sales—the same amount every month, like a paycheck) and mostly I get left alone. I'm almost 58; I'm starting to think more and more about the shortness of time.

This painting I'm working on of Peggy—I've gone over every inch of her flesh a hundred times and the person is starting to appear. It is starting to pulsate and get more solid at the same time.

I should talk to my therapist about the hypocrisy of wanting to be a "maverick, outside-type artist," wanting, at the same time, the big retrospective and recognition. Am I conning myself by saying that I want this because I want to be judged, to find out how good or not good people think I am? Maybe I want that definitive evaluation, maybe all I want is the recognition and fame.

Why don't I just say that?

11.8.94 10:00 PM

I have to isolate myself, close off, and paint the strangest images I can create. The weirder the better. I'm not bound by time or logic. Today I worked for hours on a painting of four naked people (two couples) in a rowboat at sea. Out of the bottom of the boat comes an enlarged, metaphorical umbilical cord from which a male figure emerges. He turns on himself, reaching for a faucet connected to the umbilical cord. I suppose this represents me being thrown out of the boat (of family security) and having to stretch to re-invent myself in order to survive. I am both isolated from and connected to the others. An apt metaphor for the artist.

12.11.94 Sunday Morning

A small victory over that part of me that wants to feel deprived. I put out a new set of colors and feel wealthy. No need to worry if there's enough. No need to dig around in old dried turds of color. Why do I allow inertia or laziness to create that feeling of impoverishment? When I

put on fresh colors, I feel the luxury of having plenty. A feeling of real wealth.

I turn on my favorite radio show, Dr. Joy Brown, the psychologist. I have a love/hate relationship with the radio, which I've been listening to since I was a kid. I think of myself as a radio person, not a television person (which immobilizes).

Yet there is a conflict. A part of me, the purist, wants to work in silence and feels that my concentration is subtly better without the distraction. The other part wants company, wants to avoid, I suppose, the feeling of the basic loneliness that goes with making art. It's a standoff. At different times, I've worked out various compromises. Lately I've been indulging in daytime talk shows as a kind of familiar background buzz. How does it affect my mind? It peels off the uppermost layers of conscious thought.

1.4.95

Woke up fretting about my relationship with my New York dealer. I thought about my therapist saying I had unresolved dependency issues, and that I lacked maturity in many areas. Part of the problem is that my job is to explore like a child without the restraint of pragmatism. How else do you remain playful and not get precious or too heavy or self-important about what you are doing? How else do you investigate the more bizarre areas of the mind? You can't constantly be thinking about money and career, but I do need to be more business-like in relation to my dealer. I've been on a stipend for 30 years and it's like being on a mother's tit. At the same time, I'm chronically "in the red." I'm never ahead anymore, which gives me a feeling of being in debt.

1.8.95

Woke up and immediately started thinking about the retrospective. Am I obsessed with the idea of a major retrospective to prove I am not delusional to think of myself as a great artist languishing in semi-obscurity? David Ross from the Whitney Museum wrote me a nice note about my work and said to call him when I came to the city to share a cup of coffee. I did call his office and left a message with his secretary: "I'll be in New York. Let's meet for coffee." He never called back. I tried three times. Never called back. I still don't get it.

Trevor Fairbrother, the curator of contemporary art at the MFA in Boston had told me over and over for more than a year that he was totally committed to originating a large show of my work and that it was "only a formality" to get it past some committee. He calls me up one day and has "some bad news." He has changed his mind.

A more modest show is on the books for the Witherspoon Gallery at the University of North Carolina, and the curator is sacked, partly, he says, for wanting to do shows of people like me. Much of the evidence of the outside world says my work is passé. I will be remembered, if at all, as a minor footnote to a realist revival in the '70s.

1.12.95 6:30 AM

My studio feels cluttered and disorganized. I get into habits of working on groups of related paintings for weeks at a time. First thing every day I come down and check on the tackiness of each painting. That determines which one I can work on. I start with the ones that are dry because those are the ones I can razor-blade the surface without the paint smearing.

Razor-blading, for me, is a way to open the painting up, so I can get into it. It destroys the surface, yesterday's marks, yesterday's assumptions. Things pop up from the distant past, things get rubbed off and slowly disappear.

It is early in the morning and my mind is alert. I notice everything, even the slap-dash brush marks on my paper palette as I prepare my paint. Spontaneous marks such as these have potential—some of them strike me with their bold flamboyance, some with their subtlety. I think about how I can use them—bring them into my production process and thereby expand my vocabulary.

The goal is to stretch and allow the imagination to become more elastic.

Yes, I am interested in freedom. The freedom to move in contradictory directions at the same time and see no contradiction. I love some of my calligraphic palette brush drawings, just as they are, without working on them. But what are they? Shall I give them away to friends—exuberant, quick doodles—a Zen gesture? Should I give it away in acknowledgment of my abundance? Do I transfer them to wood and use them as a ground to Rorschach into? Shall I frame them like Whistler's spontaneous paintings and define them as art? Do I say, "No, these are too precious to share freely." Do I have the nerve to define them as art, even high art of some calligraphic kind?

Razor-blading and sanding the painting with many different grades of sandpaper: 120, 240, 320, 420, and recently 1500. Searching for new forms, suggestions for something new and fresh. I work best when there is timelessness—no deadlines, no limits. A painting can take weeks, months, years. No urgency. No rush. At times it feels as though I'm making mantras for people to meditate on, bringing up the same questions for them that I ask myself as I make the images. Painting is as close to bliss as I ever get.

1.16.95 Afternoon

The painting of Nina. Broke through today. Realized it doesn't matter if she will like or want to buy it or that it has anything to do with her. She was the subject of a photograph I took, and this painting is a total fabrication of mine. I don't care what she thinks.

1.17.95

Mine is the art of going back again and again, countless times, over the same surfaces with the tiniest of brushes, sometimes with a magnifying glass. The forms start to take on an organic and human patina.

1.18.95

Sometimes I think the main reason my paintings get strong is I work on them so long they pick up stillness and mystery.

1.20.95

Rush nothing. Savor the slow growth of the image. The secret of persistence is tiny advances each day. At the end of a year, or two, or three, I've got a painting with character.

1.21.95

Painting with an open mind is difficult; painting with an open heart, harder.

The painting of Nina: faith that someday it will get there. Error is impossible. Since I have all the time I need, everything is at all times open to change. Yet that does not rule out that some spontaneous stroke, given the context, might be perfect.

The only time I feel painting anxiety is when I've imposed or accepted some kind of time limitation, which I almost never do anymore.

1.23.95

Recurrent mild anxiety that my supplies—paints, brushes, turpentine—are running out. A need to replenish. Sometimes I'm not on top of that, let things go. I wonder if it's a deflected anxiety from a larger fear of running out of my own supplies of juice, energy, life.

2.1.95

I spent seven years in Italy on Fulbrights and Prix de Rome grants in my 20s. Now in my late 50s when I request a residency at the Academy in Rome, I am turned down. The unspoken message: Sorry, this is for artists more famous and well-connected than you.

The art world was always hierarchical, I am sure. It is human. But it seems to me that, somewhere in the 1950s, things got more cynical than usual.

I talked to my therapist this week about feeling that I am still, at heart, this Catholic kid, around eight or nine years old, who is trying to work out his relationship with God and Christ. Painting is like trying to be an altar boy, to show God how serious I am about doing good and being part of the Mass. Basically I want God's approval and I have this childlike identification with Christ—He was my man, my hero—and all of the Catholic guilt that comes with not ever being able to measure up, not ever being pure enough, strong enough, wise enough. And here I am actively wanting recognition from this most secular (pagan) world. An image comes up: Christ with a cellular phone, calling his public relations people and announcing that he'd be in Jerusalem by mid-week and could they have some donkeys for Him and could they arrange a big crowd maybe using palm tree leaves as a theme for the parade. And maybe they could stage the crucifixion on the weekend because more people would be off from work and it would draw a bigger gathering, etc.

We also went into how the Catholic Church, with its heavenly hierarchy and also its earthly

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Massachusetts Cultural Council
Review Panel statement, 1996

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hierarchy from the Pope on down to the parish priests, has been replaced in my sub-brain by the art establishment. Museums are like the holy cathedrals. Critics, dealers, collectors, patrons, and museum directors are all part of the hierarchy replacing the church fathers—priests, bishops, and popes. Artists, past and present, are also in a hierarchy ranked like the saints and martyrs of Christian mythology. I feel the same ambivalence about "making it" in the art world that I felt about the Catholic Church as I got older, when I still wanted to belong but was disgusted at its worldliness, dogmatism, corruption, and lack of real spiritual vigor.

7.7.95 Vermont Studio School 9:30 PM

A growing desire to be alone and paint. I can't relate to the depressing view about the art world where nothing is selling, galleries closing, artists scrounging for jobs after doing so well in the '80s.

People will recognize how great my paintings are, and everyone will want one. Is this healthy self-regard or self-delusional grandiosity? (I'm over \$100,000 in debt to my dealer.)

Today I went to B.'s studio. I might have hurt her feelings because I didn't have much praise to offer.

I went back to the studio and painted in the heat, as hot as I ever remember it getting. I like the heat bearing down, the outside world scorched. Everybody's inside, trying to stay cool. I paint in spite of it, in defiance, paint-wacky!

At 4:00 PM I treat myself to a two-hour break before dinner. My apartment is cooler. I take my clothes off and lie down on the bed. I hear the river through a window and feel a slight warm breeze. I focus on sensations on my skin surface. Breathing. I feel a deep pleasure. I listen. I lay my hands on my chest and groin and enjoy the weight of my hands, and their texture. As usual, there is a subtle feeling of disappointment, as if I'm missing something fundamental. Eventually, sleep will take over and the "I" will seem to disappear, but it won't. It never does.

7.12.95

People ask why I paint so many self-portraits. I always mention the availability of the subject and the freedom to take dramatic license. The subject (me) and the painter (me) both want to make a strong picture and not flatter anyone's vanity. Am I a narcissist, focused only on his own melodrama—painting my own image over and over? Or, by exploring the familiar and particular, do I manage to touch something universal? I believe I do. I'm not just painting Gregory's fear of death—we all fear it. I am fond of looking at my own body, my own face, but without vanity. I see it as God's work, nothing personal, nothing special about my body and face. It just happens to be the one I have right here to appreciate.

I am mostly a visual person. Most everything looks very good to me. I spend a lot of time looking at things—everything I can get my eyes on—but there is something special about faces. I almost never get bored looking at people's faces.

Maybe that's the first thing a baby trains itself to read—big people's faces.

7.27.95

Won't see my therapist till September, after teaching and painting in Provincetown all of August.

7.28.95

My practical mind tells me to work on the painting of Nina Nielsen and John Baker, and finish before I leave for P'town. A summer show at her gallery. Fantasy of them showing it to T.F. at the MFA in Boston and him cringing with remorse, guilt, self-doubt—my work now so strong he is compelled to apologize and beg to curate my retrospective.

If this fantasy did come true, would it be the worst thing that could happen to me?

Patience. Art is a form of Tantric sex, a play in the present, not a push to some orgasmic event.

The Nielsen painting is 95-percent done.

8.11.95 Provincetown

All day at the beach. I still feel the sun in my body, shiny, tight, tingly, warmer than usual. I feel my surface flushed with blood—face, shoulders, back, belly, legs, ankles, feet. The mystery to end all mysteries begins and ends with inquiry into how the present is actually being experienced—none of us know much of the fundamentals of mind/body/spirit—and we plod along, doing it, without appreciating its utter improbability.

Slowing down, hoping for the occasional glimpse—that's about as far as I've gotten in my 60 years. Lying in bed at night, when the mind isn't galloping off, I focus on the breath coming into my nose and my lungs, and the exhale. So basic, so primal—breath, heart beat, the mechanics of the body, and something called conscious awareness. It's so simple, yet so complex. Where are the boundaries between self, thought, sensation, present, past, future? The tighter the focus, the more uncertain the old assumptions become. After a few seconds of this stillness, thought and memory rush in, inevitably, and carry me to more familiar terrain. Eventually, that sweet passage leads downward to sleep.

8.12.95 Provincetown 6:10 AM

Squeezing out fresh paints on my palette, I think of a poem I'd write about oil paint. An homage to paint and the exotic and suggestive names of colors. Ivory Black, Burnt Sienna, Raw Umber, Cadmium Yellow, Venetian Red, Cobalt Blue, Sap Green. How a painter comes to love each color for its unique qualities and potentialities and finally learns to accept the limitations of each color. So it would be a love poem.

Naples Yellow, Prussian Green, Alizarin Crimson and my new favorite, Blue Hoggar—even when you add white, it doesn't lose its vitality.

6.10.96 Vermont Studio School 10:55 PM

I'm a teacher for a month. The young woman from Miami, a goddess who knows it. We think very differently. I want everything in my paint-

ings to make sense. She says she doesn't want her paintings to make sense.

She has an amazing face and figure, moves in a nice way. She says she was born in Jamaica—her father is half Chinese, her mother is black. A nice blend, I say. I have a daughter who is African American and white and she said she knew that—she saw the painting of her in my slide show and figured she was a mixture. She uses words, phrases, in her paintings like, "My Mama says," with a few abstract shapes and colors. The words are there, she says, for texture, shape, color.

When I first meet a student, I spend time getting to know them. I feel more like a counselor than a critic. I try to find out where the blocks are, the self-defeating behaviors, and the goals of the person. I try to meet the person somewhere on a ground that we both lay out. I try to figure out how I can help. It's a delicate business. Sometimes it's necessary to risk offending.

I spent a long time telling L. how her triptych of scissor parts was a graphic design, not a painting—nothing painterly was happening. The drawing was clumsy, the color weak and washy, the scale too small. She took it on the chin, but overall I am very encouraging. A lot are like her, worried that painting is not their destiny, given the economic difficulties.

Elizabeth works at jobs she doesn't like in New York and saves enough to quit and paint for months. The tenacity! Compared to her, I've had it easy. Todd told me that he was stuck. The thrilling work he'd been doing the week before had been stymied after a visit home to his pregnant wife.

6.23.96 11:00 AM

As executive officer of this production company, "Gillespie Paints," I realize I am displeased with marketing and sales. I don't sense any vision from that department. I am frustrated. Sales are slow.

Sometimes I think Robert doesn't realize what he's got in me. To him, I am this pain-in-the ass ego-crazed artist who wants more than he deserves. It's an odd symbiosis. Robert deals with "reality"—sales, exhibitions, art fairs, promotions. Me, isolated from all that, I'm free to dream, create, fantasize, explore, produce. Robert—the adult dealing with the "possible" sends me money every month like an allowance. Me—the child, left free to play. Only it's not as simple as that. After all when a show is up on the wall, it's my skin that feels raw, and me that has total responsibility for the quality of the art.

Undated

Consciousness seems to flicker from one thing to another. Perhaps it is only attention which is constantly shifting. Consciousness is a constant, awake or asleep.

I feel happy about the paintings I'm finishing. I love the way the one of Nina and John is coming. I might call it "Thirteen Saints." Each "saint" is bisected by a seed or pod shape, but if one looks through a magnifying glass, there is more. At the core of each seed is a vignette of

minuscule figures acting out some little melodrama—suggesting that the dormant seed contains all possible futures.

I like that these paintings require different kinds of focusing in different parts. It is like life, with multiple levels of reality.

Undated

I want extreme statements, the artist almost veering out of control, sometimes lost, challenging the assumptions of the painting he's made in the past.

I don't know what to say to students who haven't made 100-percent commitment to making powerful, unique images. I talk less about individual paintings, more about their lives, what they want to do with them. I try to tell them what it's like to be a full-time painter.

8.25.96

I want my painting to show a nervous complexity, a questioning about what is real. Like the one of John and Nina: 13 (as of now) saints or souls in the bottom came out of 13 abstract, rigidly patterned brushstrokes from a medium-sized brush. I thought they were going to be tassels or columns. Returning to the painting day after day, projecting image upon image, refining to something more specific, fine-tuning, at a certain point they became saints, ghosts, spirits, souls, then they split down the middle with a much lighter color, almost white. These strokes became a spirit within a spirit, floating in front and pushed inside each and then coming out like being born. That microscopic mini-speck in the universe in which millions of years of evolutionary wisdom is stored. To celebrate the unknowable source is what these paintings are about, I'm sure.

8.28.96

I've added to the blue painting of Nina and John a new level of fanatical detail. Thirteen souls in the darkened blue-lit underground. Thirteen wandering souls in some assembly-line operation. All are impregnated with a light seed the shape of a tadpole, luminous against the blue shapes of the figures. Each seed contains microscopic vignettes which probably have to be seen under a magnifying glass. Each is very different from the other. I can endlessly draw from an unconscious pool of projectile imagery. I relish going back again and again to a site, adding and taking away, with patience, an open mind, and a lot of tolerance for myself—that's the center of the pleasure.

Insulated, I create a safe place where I can dream awake with a brush in my hand. Something like this could be written on my tombstone, but I won't have one. I want to be cremated, my powders mixed with linseed oil and put in a tube. What tint would I be? A blue-grey, an off-speed ochre, a greenish charcoal, a pale umber, or . . ."

Christopher Busa reviewed James Lechay's paintings elsewhere in this issue.

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EDWARD HOPPER

BY BUDD HOPKINS

IN 1964, WHEN JOAN AND I MOVED INTO OUR NEW summer studio in Truro, we realized that from our high ground we could see the Edward Hopper house on a ridge across the tiny Pamet River. And since the Outer Cape—Wellfleet, Truro, and Provincetown—is a rather small area, we found ourselves passing Hopper from time to time on the area's winding, narrow roads. He drove an old, bulbous Pontiac or Buick or the like, and sat hunched over the wheel with his gaze fixed rigidly straight ahead. He was truly a terrible driver, and a number of friends of mine told stories about how they almost ended a major chapter in American art, narrowly averting a head-on collision when the elderly artist wandered into their lane.

Hopper was enormously tall—about six-foot-five—but so sadly bent over that when he sat at the wheel of his old car he was shaped like the letter “C.” He favored clothes that were several decades out of style, and often wore the kind of sharp, wide-brimmed hat favored by Dick Tracy, the Crime Fighter. I very much admired Hopper's art but was well aware of his hermetic nature; even though we were nearly neighbors and in the same profession, speaking to him seemed to be completely out of the question.

My feeling about his work is that his paintings range from overly stiff, near-illustrations to some of the most powerful and evocative images in all of American art. Like the films *Citizen Kane* and even *Casablanca*, Hopper's “Nighthawks,” “Gas,” and “New York Movie,” three of his finest paintings, have become icons of both high and popular culture. (Can the pensive couple seated at the counter in “Nighthawks” be Rick and Ilsa, having made it safely to New York in another life?) In general, though, I tend to prefer Hopper's watercolors to his oils, and am particularly drawn to some of his early depictions of city rooftops with their forests of personalized chimney-pipes, his images of light-houses, some of which have their windowed domes perversely cropped by the edge of the paper, and, of course, his renderings of old Victorian structures moldering proudly in the sunlight.

His paintings focused on male and female figures are often less successful, as if his cool architectural poetry tolerated the intrusion of warm, living, human beings only with reluctance. One can no more picture a Hopper painting of a cherubic baby or a pair of young lovers than one can imagine a Renoir crucifixion.

And yet there is an odd undercurrent of repressed eroticism in Hopper, stated most blatantly in his depiction of a big-breasted stripper strutting her stuff on a burlesque stage, pasties, red hair and all. More typical, however, is the sense

of a not-quite accidental voyeuristic moment: a naked woman in an unfastened blue bathrobe, standing in the doorway of a distant house; the thighs and hindquarters of a partially-clad female apartment-dweller bending over just inside an open window; a pensive young woman in a slip, waiting, wistful and alone, on a flat, featureless hotel room bed. And for someone ostensibly so interested in sunlight, an unusually large number of Hopper's tableaux take place at night. It's enough to make me wonder if he might not have taken some of those reckless drives on the backroads of Truro in the hope of coming upon just such distant erotic enticements.

Or, put another way, I can easily imagine the aging, hermetic painter working in his studio on yet another weathered Victorian cottage, laying in the gingerbread around the entrance . . . and then at the last minute allowing his fantasy to place an alluring blonde in her gaping housecoat right at the front door, gazing out towards the viewer—in this case, the artist himself.

When Joan and I first got together, she told me a story about Edward Hopper. It needs a little background in the telling, but it is both amusing and absolutely on target. Hopper was not, shall we say, a generous man, as her recollection attests. The Puritan austerity that has come to be seen—only partially correctly—as the hallmark of Hopper's work, included a very real and unattractive miserliness. When he died, workmen renovating his Truro house found an attic full of bundles of old newspapers, boxes of empty but washed-out Listerine bottles, work shirts bought in the 1940s but never worn, and so on, all being saved, one presumes, against a rainy day when they might come in handy. And whenever he dined out at a local cafe, as he often did since his wife hated to cook, chicken à la king was his regular choice. Probably because, as a one-time patron there once told me, it was the cheapest thing on the card.

My wife was a little girl during World War II when she sometimes stayed in Truro with a family named Beal in a rented house quite close to Hopper's. One day, Joan told me, she and the Beal's daughter (“my-girlfriend-Linda;” I always pictured hyphens whenever Joan said the name) planned to draw and color and then cut out some paperdolls. Unfortunately, however, they had no paper. Town center was quite a walk away, and no one was willing to use the gas to drive them there just so that they could buy a sketch pad. But then “my-girlfriend-Linda” remembered that the old man at the top of the hill was an artist, and as such would surely have some paper to give them. They walked up the path to his place with trepidation, about to face the grouchy old codger who never talked to anyone.

They knocked on Hopper's kitchen door, and soon he answered, glowering down at them

from his impressive height. They stated their request: some paper so they could make some paper dolls. With more than a touch of anger in his voice he refused them. “The only paper I have is watercolor paper and it costs me 75 cents a sheet, and you can't have any.” With that he closed the door and the interview was over.

In my sense of him, Joan's story is pure Hopper. Who could be less likely to have sympathy for a pair of little girls than a miserly, childless man, protective of his expensive paper, an artist who, for all I knew, had never drawn or painted a child in his life? But there is a sequel to the story.

Years later, at his huge and beautiful retrospective exhibition at The Whitney Museum, Joan and I approached Hopper to congratulate him on the show. As one after another of his admirers came up to shake his hand, he seemed to be almost smiling. We introduced ourselves, and I informed him that we lived in Truro at some distance from, but in sight of, his house. We exchanged some geographical information and a few conventional niceties, and then I found myself launching into Joan's story about the watercolor paper. I had honestly forgotten its distressing denouement, remembering only the name of the Beal family and the fact that the girls wanted to borrow some paper.

Hopper said he remembered the Beals. But with Joan melting with embarrassment and dread at my side, I continued with the story until suddenly, way down the tracks, I remembered its end. The situation called for an immediate alteration. “And so,” I went on to the conclusion, “they knocked on your door and you came out, and when they asked for paper to make paper dolls, you said that all you had in the house was watercolor paper. And you gave them some.” I stopped in relief, having lamely and in the nick of time saved my own neck. Hopper's response was to frown down at me from his arched but Olympian height and say, “Nope! I never gave those little girls watercolor paper to make paperdolls.” Worse, he said it as if he still remembered the event, now some 20 years later. He knew that no little girls had ever gotten a 75-cent sheet of paper out of him.

This tight-fistedness affected, I assume, just about everything in Hopper's life. I once saw a study for one of his classic paintings, “Gas,” which he'd drawn on the kind of cheap second sheet that used to accompany packs of type-writer paper. On the back of this beautiful drawing was the carbon copy of a letter he'd written to the owner of—as I remember it—a Sunoco station in New Mexico. “Dear Sir,” the letter opened, and I paraphrase from memory: “When I was recently motoring through your town I stopped at your place of business and purchased a tire gauge for 85 cents, plus tax. It has since proven to be defective. I am returning it under separate cover to the address on your receipt. I would appreciate a full refund, as well as repay-

ment for the cost of postage. Yours sincerely," followed by a place for his signature. He wasted nothing—neither a broken tire gauge, a worthless, throw-away piece of paper, nor even the available backside of a trivial business letter.

There's another Hopper sketch of a collie dog which was done on a piece of scratchpaper bearing the letterhead of the Truro library. Obviously he'd gone there to look up pictures of collies so that he would be able to include one, accurately drawn, in a painting he was working on. Then, rather than waste a sheet of his own for such a minor task, he naturally chose to use the library's free paper.

But despite his human failings, as an artist Edward Hopper was one of America's greatest. Though formidably talented and in many respects highly sophisticated, there was also about him a kind of wooden primitivism and naivete. Apparently he looked upon Picasso and Matisse with contempt, and was absolutely wedded to the idea that art must be stringently representational. Robert Motherwell once told me of being on a two-man painting jury with Hopper, who insisted on rejecting anything that did not adhere to his own rigid esthetic, and even tried to give the first prize to his wife, Jo, who painted exactly like him.

He seemed to have only a dim idea of the compositional inventiveness that underlies his best paintings, a subtle quality that gained him respect among the very abstract and modernist artists he chose to despise. Hopper's friend Lloyd Goodrich told me that during a slide lecture he once compared the structure of a Hopper painting with that of a dramatically simplified abstraction by Mondrian. When he told his friend of the striking similarities he'd found, Hopper responded testily: "You kill me."

I've always felt that some of Hopper's urban landscapes of the '30s and '40s recall Leger's masterful city paintings of around 1920, and an occasional work even suggests the powerful abstract-expressionist dark-and-light compositions of Franz Kline. God knows what Hopper would have thought about that. All he said he wanted to do, after all, was "to paint sunlight on the side of a house." We can be thankful he did so much more. ■

Budd Hopkins, a painter and sculptor, was featured on the cover of Provincetown Arts in 1991, along with a dozen other artists who comprise Provincetown's artist-run cooperative Long Point Gallery. "Hopper" is a chapter in Hopkins's "ongoing autobiography," which joins his career as an artist with his avocation as a world-authority on UFO's. Hopper is America's artist of alienation and Hopkins is our poet of aliens. The date of Hopkins first UFO sighting on the Cape was the summer he moved near Hopper.

HOPPER HOUSE STUDIO WINDOW, 1996
PHOTO. CHRISTOPHER BUSA



Trauma, Art, and Poetic Knowledge

BY ANNE-MARIE LEVINE

Author's note: The following remarks were made at Maale-Hachamisha, just outside of Jerusalem, in March 1996 to an audience of Israeli, American, and German clinicians, scholars, and artists. The conference was organized by the Israeli Ministry of Health to discuss new ways of helping 800 chronically hospitalized Holocaust survivors in Israel, using video testimony as therapy and documentation. Special attention was paid in this presentation to the often-expressed concern of the group that these survivors might be unable to use language coherently enough to bear witness to their own experiences.

I understand my subject to be the process by which art, or meaning, is made out of witnessing. How is art made out of trauma? How does art "know" trauma? How does trauma become art? What can clinicians learn from artists about trauma? These are most probably the questions. I cannot answer them, but I can give you some ideas.

You have a powerful partial answer in the film we saw Thursday night, a film made from a marathon 32-hour group therapy session with Israeli-born children of survivors. I think that what the members of that group did is what artists do—they testify. At any rate, that is what traumatized artists do; and it is a question if there is such a thing as an artist without a central trauma. But the artist in that film, the person who made art out of trauma, is the director, by virtue of the choices he made in editing those 32 hours of film.

Now I want to read you some lines from Samuel Beckett, the Irish playwright/poet who chose to live in France and who wrote sometimes in English, sometimes in French, often serving as his own translator: "there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express." This is a description of survivor art, or of what drives survivor art, and it has some relevance, I think, for the situation of the 800 individuals whose fate we have been discussing.

Here are two other statements, by or about Beckett, which seem to me to bear upon the situation as well. About *Waiting for Godot*: "Waiting in Beckett's sense is an alternate activity. Waiting becomes a way of living; waiting for inspiration, recognition, understanding, or death." And this: Beckett was asked why he wrote. He said, "I couldn't bear not to leave a stain upon the silence."

In my view one becomes an artist not only because one has the ability, but because of a kind of pressure, what Beckett calls "obligation," a drive, a sense that one has something to say, a message perhaps, that one *must* deliver. Even if one is not aware of, or clear, verbally, what it is that one must say.

Here I want to quote a painter, Mark Rothko, the great Jewish abstract expressionist artist, who came to the United States from Russia as a child: "There is no such thing as good painting about nothing. We assert that the subject is crucial and only that subject matter is valid which is tragic and timeless." And remember that Rothko painted completely abstract canvases. His view arises from trauma. Here are some lines from Aharon Appelfeld: "right after the war. . .there arose, inchoate and inarticulate, the first efforts at expression. Later the desire to keep silence and the desire to speak became deeper; and only artistic expression, which came years later, could attempt to bridge those two difficult imperatives."

Now: what about art? Is it a home for trauma? I say yes. Art closely parallels the workings of the mind and the subjects on which the mind dwells. For instance: art is a home for silence, space, fragments, juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated fragments, accretion of details, layering, collage, dislocation, gaps, leaps, repetition, lists.

Art frees one of the obligation to be consistent, the obligation to be logical, to "make sense." It frees one of the tyranny of cause and effect. Art encourages forms of expression which do not include facts, may not include story or narrative, or even words. Art can work by exclusion, the "conspicuous exclusion" Lawrence Weschler finds in the painting of Vermeer—the notion of themes that are "saturatingly present but only as *felt absence*—themes that are being held at bay, but conspicuously so."

Art is a language; it is the language of the unconscious; it is a direct link to the unconscious; art can bypass the conscious; art can bypass the anecdote, the story, and thus express a more profound range of feeling; art can bypass sequence, logic, cause and effect, factual memory, even fear.

Art may express the unknown; art is a balancing act between unconscious (that is, the source) and conscious (discipline, the editing self); art may express trauma in a way that makes it intelligible to the rest of us; art presupposes a dialogue.

Artists aren't necessarily aware of what they know. But they transform it into something others can know. Art is a way to tell, even if you don't know what it is you're telling.

We know that silence is toxic. Art is a way of breaking the silence.

Dreams, Fragments

*A baby lies in a man's hand
It does not breathe
We try hard to revive it
I jump up and down
We fail
I cry and cry*

*The baby is mine
It is I
We are the baby
It is the aborted twin*

The hand is yours

"I can't go on, I'll go on"

*I make an appointment to have my vocal cords
cut*

*"Everyone possesses in his own unconscious
an instrument with which he can interpret
the utterances of the unconscious in another"*

There is a record in the body of what happened

Memory muscles out invention

*May one loose one's Holocaust memories on another,
or must one keep them oneself?*

*If you had been clear-headed we could have gone
farther
If you had been clear-headed I could have stayed
longer*

*"You are my son. Your book will be the child
of my book."*

*Anne-Marie Levine is the author of a collection of
poems, Euphorbia, published by PROVINCETOWN
ARTS PRESS in 1994.*

Herta Müller:

Art Transcends Boundaries

INTERVIEW BY BEVERLEY DRIVER EDDY



HERTA MÜLLER PHOTO BY TRUMAN EDDY

The Romanian-German poet and novelist Herta Müller burst upon the European literary scene in 1984 with the publication of a collection of short stories entitled *Niederungen* (English: *Lowlands*), a work which had to be smuggled out of her native Romania in order to appear uncensored in the West. Because of this work and her outspoken resistance to the Ceausescu regime, she was pressured to emigrate to Germany in 1987. Since then, she has won a dozen literary awards and produced 11 more books. Her most recent novel, *Herztier* (English: *The Land of Green Plums*), won her the prestigious European literary prize "Aristeion" in 1995. In November 1996 Metropolitan Books published the English translation of what is arguably her most autobiographical work.

Reading Herta Müller's books, one experiences the claustrophobic closeness of Nitzkydorf, the German-speaking village in the Banat, where she spent the first 15 years of her life, and the repressive climate of Timisoara, where she was a student, a translator in a machine factory, and a teacher. One learns about her early alienation from a corrupt society and an oppressive, dictatorial regime; the psychological damage she suffered as a consequence of constant surveillance, questionings, and death threats from the Romanian secret police; and the estrangement she felt as a foreigner in Germany, despite the fact that her native language was also the language of her new country.

During her first visit to the United States in 1996, Herta Müller came to Provincetown, where she visited a special Edward Hopper exhibit at the Pilgrim Monument. She had long admired Edward Hopper's works, and had seen his paintings in European and New York museums. One day during her stay in Provincetown, she was taken by friends to see the Hopper home in Truro. She memorialized her visit to Truro later in a collage poem, pieced together from isolated words and images, and published below with the poet's translation from the German.

when the wisteria hangs
like an open accordion
men dance together
Truro Truro
on the green mountain
have eaten red lobster
have inherited a dog
after the death of the little performer
the show like two taverns
and the moon wears pale trousers
around the mountain
the water gleams like a railway station

BEVERLEY EDDY: What did you like about the Hopper exhibit in Provincetown?

HERTA MÜLLER: I was very interested in the photos of houses from the town and then, beneath them, the pictures he painted of them. Although Hopper reproduced the houses in almost every detail, the paintings are completely different. It surprised me to see that these houses really exist, and that they were not invented by him. Human existence shines through his work so strongly that I always thought it was all a projection of his own thoughts. I could not imagine that his works were simply a copy of reality with the alienation that they kindle.

BE: Is this a technique that you use in your own work?

HM: I would never dare to compare my work with Hopper's.

BE: Would you admit to similarities?

HM: I would simply say that Hopper is the proof that there is nothing provincial in art, because if human angst is embedded in art's portrayal of the provincial, then art has already moved far beyond it.

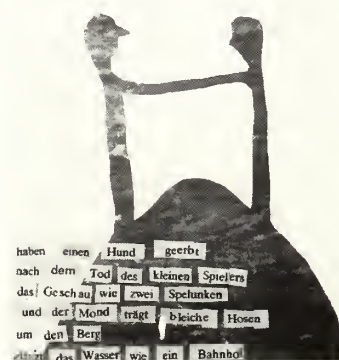
BE: Is this what distinguishes the true artist from the regionalist? Is this what you strive for in your writing?

HM: Regional art, regional literature, that is an uncritical affirmation of a region, isn't it? I hope I do exactly the opposite in my writing. I do not write about a world that is intact, a region that one must exalt and idolize. On the contrary, the reason why I write is to dismantle this world, to strip it bare.

BE: Would you call your works autobiographical?

HM: I would call them "invented reality." The title story in *Lowlands* was invented, but the story

hängen die Glyzinen da
wie ein offenes Akkordeon
tanzen Männer miteinander
Truro Truro
auf dem grünen Berg
haben roten Krebs gegessen



haben einen Hund geerbt
nach dem Tod des kleinen Spielers
das Geschau wie zwei Spelunken
und der Mond trägt bleiche Hosen
um den Berg
glänzt das Wasser wie ein Bahnhof

is true. Here the damage done to a child is concentrated into the literary image; experience creates the story.

BE: Your works deal with Ceausescu's Romania, a world far removed from that of the United States. How can Americans identify with your books, understand them?

HM: I wouldn't even speak of Americans, but ask instead, what can people in general do with a book that deals with or is set in a very different region? I have often said, I learned more about the village I lived in from the books of Gabriel Garcia Marquez than in all the other books that originated in my environment. Also from Thomas Bernhard, and both authors come from completely different corners of the map and both have never set foot in Romania. And I believe I have learned a lot about the dictatorship in the books of both, especially in books where that wasn't even the theme.

BE: Is that the lesson you are trying to pass on in your books?

HM: I am not interested in my works in portraying the historical reality, but rather in exploring what a dictatorship does to the individual, what it destroys in a person. And those kinds of damage that come out of dictatorships, that you can recognize in people, are always the same. I noticed that when I read books about the Holocaust, where this situation is naturally extreme—where it cannot be more extreme. But also diaries from prison cells and of course also from the Gulag, from every kind of confinement, whether it is in a concentration camp or in a prison or in a war. And therefore when I read Richard Ford's *The Ultimate Good Luck*, I recognized in very many things there the kind of damage that I think I have suffered. And that's what is important, that people, when they read a book, are able to comprehend and identify with these things. And because I believe that this Vietnam Syndrome is very well known in American society, and because an awful lot has been written about it, and films have been made, and there's been a lot of discussion about it, I believe that

perhaps one can understand what happens to people in dictatorships, and why people are broken and no longer able, without help, to live on in a world that perhaps no longer has this threat afterwards. But it is too late then, because the damage is already too great.

BE: Why is the story of the narrator's childhood so important in *The Land of Green Plums*? These portions of the novel make no mention of the Ceausescu dictatorship, and yet you say that the theme of your work is the destructiveness of the dictatorship.

HM: It is a part of the narrator in the novel, like a kind of parallel which arises. Through this childhood, in which things for the most part were based on coercion, control, supervision, prohibition, it seems to the narrator later that these things are continued in the form of the state, even though they are continued in a completely different manner. And, despite the fact that they can also be explained completely differently, they have a similar impact on the narrator. That which during her childhood was kept within limits and under control by the village, continued later, and then suddenly in much greater measure, in immensely greater measure, when a whole state suddenly was there. And sometimes it seems to the narrator that what happened in childhood is just a preparation for what happens in much stronger and naturally fatal measure later on. I mean, there weren't any death threats in the family; none of the parents and no one from the village ever intended to kill the narrator. Whereas the state constantly used this threat in order to keep the person in its control.

BE: Is this the reason why you reject the word "homeland"? Because of memories of what you endured as a child in your village?

HM: The word has been misused for a very long time in German history. Through the Nazis, through Hitler, through National Socialism, a lot was set in motion with this word. One always used the word "homeland" for, I don't know, "fatherland"; one misused it politically. I come from Romania, where there was a German minority, and this German minority lived in great isolation and always made allusions to "homeland." When Hitler started the war, this minority stood with Hitler, on Hitler's side in the war. My father's generation was also in the SS. And so this word was particularly misused in the minority population I come from.

BE: Doesn't the word also have something to do with longing?

HM: There is a writer who lives in Germany, who comes from Iran. He has been in Germany for 30 years. He fled once from the Shah, and then from Khomeini, and he wrote a book in which the sentence appears, "Homeland is the time that we have lost." That means we have lost in exile. As "longing," then, as the "wish" for something, I can accept the word. But wherever it is used ideologically, and wherever it is used to distinguish oneself from others, that is,

to be better than others—(that is, in fact, usually the reason why one distinguishes oneself; otherwise one doesn't make distinctions)—then I find the word problematical.

BE: Isn't "longing" actually "homesickness"?

HM: Homesickness exists only when one doesn't have a homeland any more. I like the word "homesickness" a bit more than "homeland," because it is tied to pain. To that extent I can deal with it a little better, although I myself would never say, "I am homesick." I don't think the feeling is something rational. It is completely different among many people. It becomes acute, in my case, or in the case of people who have had to go into exile from a political situation, a dictatorship, which forced people to leave the country, or who were driven out of the country, or who fled in order to escape death. That's where this feeling of having lost something is especially strong; one didn't decide to leave on one's own. It is different to leave some place of one's own free will, rather than when one is forced to leave because of fear for one's life, of death threats, because a system does not allow one to live in a country. Then rage also arises, about how unjust it is, because one asks oneself why the land belongs to these dictators, why it doesn't belong to the many other people who have left the country. In Iran 12 million people live in exile. There are many Muslims, fields of corpses, millions of people whom this dictatorship has already murdered, millions of people abroad, and there is a small group of people who insist that this government remain the way it is. To whom, practically speaking, this state belongs, because they have brought it under their power. They have made it their own, which implies that they have made the lives of other people their own. Isn't that true? And this feeling of homesickness arises, then it becomes a political word.

BE: Do you feel that you are a foreigner, a stranger, in Germany? Or did you feel a stranger in Romania, because you were a dissident, and part of a German-speaking minority?

HM: In a dictatorship one is always a stranger when one doesn't collaborate. As a political opponent of a system one is also a stranger. When one has an opinion that is not permitted by the officials in a country, one is also a stranger. One is always a stranger when one doesn't belong. And often one doesn't belong because one thinks. When one thinks, one often does not belong any more. So many people do not think, and that makes one a stranger, too.

BE: Many refugees who have had to flee their country came to Germany, but they lost not just the country, but the language as well. How was it different for you, as a speaker of German?

HM: I feel—let's put it this way—as if I don't belong. The reason comes from the facts. I was already 30 years old when I left Romania, an adult, socialized in another society. For me, German society was just as strange as for every other person, no matter where one comes from. Language is something in common. But language is

not everything that makes up identity. In such situations one notices how small a part of identity language actually is. So much else plays a part. I can imagine someone who comes from Western Europe to Germany now, a Frenchman, for example, or a Swede or a Norwegian or a Dane, would feel less a stranger in Germany than I do, even when he doesn't speak the language, because the societies are similar. Because their socialization proceeded in a more similar manner than in my case.

BE: Still, can't one say that language is nevertheless extremely important for one's sense of identity, because it shapes the way one thinks?

HM: I lived with two languages. I have Romanian—the language of the country, the language of the state; the official language was Romanian. In Romania I spoke three times as much Romanian all day, even with friends, and in official circles in general, in every store, on the street, at work, that is, on the job. I spoke and thought three times as much in Romanian as in German.

BE: But you write only in German?

HM: Yes. German was a private language, related only to the things that were private and had to do with personal friends and such. German is of course my mother language. I learned it as a child. Only when I was seven did I learn Romanian in school. German has this advantage, and has kept it. I always had both languages in my head, and I always found it very nice that one lives in two languages, and that no one language is taken for granted, that the one language always calls the other into question. Romanian is a much more sensual language—it is, after all, a Latin language—a language full of imagery, and a language that, from the standpoint of thinking, is formed completely differently from German. But a language does not guarantee a way of thinking, a way of viewing the world, a life philosophy, a personal position. A language guarantees nothing.

BE: Critics have noted both the poetic beauty and the harsh simplicity of your language. How would you describe it?

HM: I write in a very cold language, because my themes are so devastating. I wrote *The Land of Green Plums* in three to four months, and was drained when it was done.

BE: How do you like visiting Provincetown? Is it a problem being a stranger here?

HM: One should always feel one is a stranger. It is a good position.

Beverly Driver Eddy is Professor of German at Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA, and writes about German and Scandinavian topics. She comes from an old Cape Cod family, and her brother lives in Tnuo.

HOWARD NORMAN

Museum Guard

The Museum Guard Notebooks

BY MARGARITTE HUPPERT

"You get your loud blokes." (LONDON)

*

"I have the respect of my fellow guards, for me restraint with the now-and-then stupid sort, and for doing me homework on the paintings themselves, case I'm to answer a now-and-then type of question." (LONDON)

*

"I fell in love with a tourguide and we married. She was a volunteer." (NEW YORK)

*

"Well, we had the paintings of William Blake, and I'll tell you, they got into my dreams. At night, I usually don't have a thought in my head about the paintings I'm with all day, but not with the Blake. With the Blake, no, sir, that was a surprise." (LONDON)

*

"The seeing-eye dog barked at a dog in the American painting." (LONDON)

*

"I asked a group of Germans to lower their voices." (LONDON)

*

"The students come and copy the paintings, day after day, and I never tire of seeing them. Never tire of it." (SAN FRANCISCO)

*

"The present exhibition was crowded the first day or so. After that, I've managed to get a lot of reading done." (MONTREAL)

*

"I had to change rooms; I kept seeing the woman in the painting on the street. It wasn't her, of course. It was someone else." (VANCOUVER)

*

"We had one hundred paintings of Cupids." (AMSTERDAM)

*

"This is my watch, and it's got a little alarm, and on the hour, I move to a different corner. On the hour. I have it down pat. And it's necessary, and I'm speaking only for myself, mind you. It's necessary to have a routine. The rooms in our museum are not all that big. Not like the more famous museums." (WASHINGTON)

This interview took place one evening last November at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Montreal. The American writer Howard Norman was en route to northern California to research several writing projects; a *New York Times* "Sophisticated Traveler" article, and a short story for an anthology to be published by Farrar, Straus, Giroux in collaboration with the Nature Conservancy. His travels would take him to the Dye Creek Preserve north of Sacramento and on to the Pt. Reyes National Seashore, an hour north of San Francisco. There had just been a French-language reading on the radio of sections of Norman's most recent novel, *The Bird Artist*; Norman read from the original in English. The post-reading discussion was lively, ranging through American writers whose stories are about Canada, Canadian literature in general, the "far north" of Canada, the McGarrigle Sisters, a recent biography of Leonard Cohen ("sycophantic, disappointing, my hopes for it were too high"), Glenn Gould, bird life in the Maritimes, writing for cinema, literature in translation, and so forth. Norman, for all of his disclaimers, proved to be indeed knowledgeable about Canadian writers, about the cities as well as the outposts. His favorite topic, wildlife, especially arctic wildlife, led to rather esoteric call-in discussions of the snowy owl and the arctic fox. There was one caller from Churchill, Manitoba.

Norman is a recent winner of the \$50,000 Lannan Award in fiction. Both his first and second novels were nominated for the National Book Award in the States. He is the recipient of the New England Booksellers Association Award, and many fellowships. He has written for film, both Hollywood and independent, and documentary. His novels have garnered uncharacteristically tolerant, deservedly generous, and attentive reviews in the Canadian press. Norman is 47. He has a slightly Mongolian or otherwise exotic cast to his features—his ancestry, in fact, is Russian Jewish. With unkempt, black hair, and a ready laugh, he struck the interviewer as having a seriousness at times tempered only by a slightly less serious take. His directness was at times startling, but always graceful and polite; he is not without opinions. This interview has been edited from a considerably longer original. During the late evening, Mr. Norman drank a rather remarkable amount of coffee, having ordered two cafe lattes from room service, added to the pot of coffee already in the room when I arrived. "You have a very early flight," I said. "How will you manage to get to sleep?" His answer: "I'm not a good flyer, so to speak. So I

prefer to fly exhausted, and try to sleep on the plane. I'll probably stay up until at least 3:00 A.M., go down to the lobby, come back up to my room.

MARGARITTE HUPPERT: Howard, your new novel, *The Museum Guard*, from which you read a section tonight, takes place in Halifax, Nova Scotia. After *The Bird Artist*, which is placed in Newfoundland, it is your second novel you've set in our Maritimes. Your first novel, *The Northern Lights*, was largely set in northern Manitoba. Canada, for the time being at least, seems your fictional territory.

HOWARD NORMAN: Several of the main characters in *The Northern Lights*, traveled from northern Manitoba down to Toronto, where *The Northern Lights* movie theater was. In *The Bird Artist*, several of the main characters flee to Halifax for a makeshift wedding. So, in each of my novels, there have been two Canadian settings; there has been—even if only for the duration of a chapter—a kind of outback/city axis. In the case of *The Northern Lights*, Toronto takes up about a third of the story. If I had to do it over again—which I don't, and don't want to—I would've played out the entire story in the north. Now, in *The Museum Guard* two geographies are at work once again, but this time it's Halifax and Amsterdam—in the late 1930s, as Hitler's psychotic Reich is building in power. The central action of the story takes place in Halifax. Amsterdam, the war, Jewish life in the Netherlands, and so on, is all imported into the Maritimes via radio broadcasts and the arrival of paintings to a small museum. Yet in the end, a character—this novel is about the severest sort of unrequited love—a woman named Imogen Linny, indeed travels into Amsterdam, at a time when Europe, for the fortunate, was a place from which to escape. In that sense, in the person of Imogen Linny, Halifax is imported into Amsterdam. I find it natural that Canada is the place I've chosen to set novels. The novel I have outlined to write next, called *Photographing Souls*, will be set in and around Churchill, Manitoba. I have no qualms or self-doubts about constructing those Canadian fictional worlds.

MH: I think you've just given away the ending to *The Museum Guard*.

HN: Would you like more coffee?

MH: Not yet, thanks.

HN: I don't think it's possible to fully "give away" the ending of a novel. Someone has to read the

The Museum Guard Notebooks

"Tell me, sir. What do you think of my profession, just looking at me, here in the museum?" (LONDON)

"I work this room, mornings. I work the room opposite, afternoons. On my day off—two days, since the museum is closed on Mondays. I sometimes meet Jake, he's a guard here, and his wife, the three of us, for dinner. We never talk about work. We know the work so well, we don't have to talk about it." (SEATTLE)

"The disaffected teenagers hanging around in groups, they never worry me. They cause problems, but you can deal with them. They're like one bad mood, altogether as a bunch, when they walk in the room, but they don't bother me. In some ways, they're so obvious, they don't bother me at all. See what I mean? I mean, a nice cloud in the sky can be a figure of authority to them, if they're in that kind of mood, you know, an us-versus-them mood. But I can deal with that. I don't worry about the paintings." (PHILADELPHIA)

"Once a week, Thursdays, we meet, five fellow guards, myself, meet at a pub. Lovely fellows, all, and we chat it up about what we've seen, about football, about what we've seen." (LONDON)

"I didn't talk to the new guard, after introduction, 'Hello, good to have you on board,' didn't talk to him for two weeks, because why? Because he hadn't been bloody told—nor observed as much—that he could talk to the other guards, what?" (LONDON)

"I've been a guard, what now, oh, 20, 21 years. I wouldn't have it otherwise, really. I fell into the work. I fell into it and it was my uncle who asked about it on my behalf, and the curator gave me a very nice interview, really. Not much else to say. I was watched closely for a few days, is all, really, only that. My uncle and I, him being 20 years my senior, and we got along all right. My mother and father—well, I was orphaned. And I lived with my uncle up till age 16, was the truth of it, and I became a guard at 17, and it's been a... a... decent... I'll stick with that word, a decent life." (HALIFAX)

ending, experience the emotional dimensions of an ending; it's merely the culmination of the whole. So I've never once minded if someone tells me how a story ends. It's never diminished my pleasure in reading it. With a crime novel, perhaps knowing in advance how clues and intimations add up, the equation between incidents spiced by a ubiquitous sense of mystery, how that particular fictional puzzle is solved—"Don't tell me!" In fact, I've never minded when someone's told me the end of a movie. Even that.

MH: At a bicycle race, then, you'd not stand near the finish line; you'd rather see someone drop out 10 miles back, some interim kind of drama—the disgrace of the bicyclist spilling over from heat exhaustion—than cheer the winner?

HN: Given those two choices, you're exactly right.

MH: Do you know the ending of your own novels when you begin?

HN: Whenever I've begun to write a novel—which, mind you, is only three times—yes, I've determined the ending in advance, and so far they each have in fact remained intact. You know the end; the problem, of course, is how to get there. I think of certain Inuit and subarctic Indian admonitions, not to speak in the future tense when out on hunting trips; life is too full of ambushes and unpredictabilities—spirits that control the environment might be insulted if you take for granted your safe return, if you consider the world a safe place, and that no matter what the enterprise, it is merely a matter of putting in your time. Also by saying, "I can't wait to get back home and sit by the fire," you might be jinxing yourself, tempting fate. Maybe the presiding spirits—which I wholeheartedly, not as convenient or exotic projections of paranoia and anxiety, but deep in my heart and soul believe in—are always alert to our collective and individual arrogance. So, you see, Margaritte, now I'm nervous, talking about a yet-to-be-completed novel. Let me backtrack: Imogen Linny goes to Amsterdam at the end of *The Museum Guard*, antisemitism, the enacted policy of Hitler's Reich, raging more fully by the day—but that is not the *very* end of the novel, that's not the last page.

MH: I feel better now. Getting back to Halifax; it seems that *The Museum Guard* could not have taken place anywhere else. Rather than feeling researched, Halifax feels evoked.

HN: That's a compliment any writer would hope is accurate. Halifax is the opposite of an arbitrary setting. It was the first place I spoke to a museum guard "in real life," at the initial stages of thinking about writing a novel essentially about museum guards. It was happenstance. I wandered into a museum, a conversation started up. I was the museum's only visitor that morning, and I had a cup of tea with the guard after his work hours. He went home to his family; I went to the then rather shabby Lord Nelson Hotel—which is a centerpiece of *The Museum Guard*—and wrote down our entire conversation as best I could remember. Not knowing if it

meant anything at all at the time. That museum guard had mentioned a particular painting of Cupid, and our conversation that day eventually informed quite succinctly a chapter, "Cupid," of *The Museum Guard*.

What's more, in that museum—this was in 1980—there were indeed nephew and uncle guards; in the novel, Edward and DeFoe Russet are uncle and nephew museum guards. In my 1980 experience, the nephew was interested in talking about art, his views of museum guarding, and so on; he's the one I took tea with. He was affable, sweet tempered, quite pleased at having such a good, steady job. In severe contrast, the uncle was at best taciturn—generally a spiteful, cranky character, who seemed both to be plagued by and rely on self-generated theories. He had certain tantalizin—for the novelist—hostilities toward his profession, not entirely humorless, but at best a rather defensive humor. It was the uncle who by chance offered the indelible term "museum behaviors" to me. I blocked that out in large letters in my notebook, I remember. I couldn't possibly know all that term meant to him—or, later, to my fictional character who echoed this "real" uncle. This uncle, who made it known in no uncertain terms that he was a keen observer of humanity. And that he judged his nephew as naive.

Leaving the museum that afternoon, I said to myself, "I wouldn't want to be with *them* all day!" That kind of reprieve, the immense, inimitable freedom of walking along a wharf—in this instance, along Halifax Harbor—vast, cloudless sky, after a bout of claustrophobia. A nice stroll through the so-called "Historic District." Yet in one respect, since those two served as distant models for the museum guards in my novel, it turns out I've spent every day for several years with them after all!

MH: And Halifax must have had certain even larger resonances.

HN: I chose to set *The Museum Guard* in Halifax because I wanted to keep visiting and revisiting that city. I like Halifax very much. Yet some of the reasons I like it remain mysterious to me. I like a Maritime dirge that says, "Between Canada and the sea / in Peggy's Cove my love lies waiting for me." Halifax is between the big cities and the sea. And, to me, Halifax has a rather severe melancholy about it. I'm sure I impose some of that. But I think a melancholy is fully resident there as well. More practically, perhaps, it is a city whose streets I can visualize. I can tour it in memory. Of course I have maps. But I can close my eyes and take myself into several hotel lobbies, parks, cemeteries, museums. Naturally, I don't know the city like a citizen of Halifax would. But I knew where I wanted my characters to live, eat, walk, sit on porches. The "great explosion" that occurred in Halifax makes it a wounded city, as all cities are to some extent. I love going into the historical archives there. To look up the civic outcry at having Trotsky—really Lev Bronstein—interned in the Citadel Prison in the center of Halifax for some days, giving occasional German lessons to a prison

guard, while his wife—Mrs. Bronstein, that is—was quite a dramatic, outspoken presence around town. I once saw the film, directed by the emigre Emil Lester, called *My Official Wife*, which Trotsky acted in—this was filmed in New York City, and was about Russian emigre revolutionaries. A silent film, it has Trotsky pounding his fists against the walls of a dark tenement basement. It was filmed—and the actors received two dollars per day—just before Trotsky, his family, and entourage, left for Europe, and finally Russia, on the *S.S. Christiansford*, which docked in Halifax, where Trotsky was arrested and momentarily detained. If you telescope on any city, you find that remarkable incidents took place. In *The Museum Guard*, I don't attempt to impart a lot of historical information. I'm only attempting to tell a hopefully compelling story.

MH: How often, in museums, have you made a "research" effort, as it were, to speak with the guards?

HN: Quite often, actually. I haven't ever been outright chatty with any museum guards in the larger museums, with the exception of one in Seattle, Washington. And on occasion—after observing them for some time—in Washington, D.C. There might be a snippet of friendly banter. That happens, especially if a room is not otherwise crowded. In the David Smith sculpture room, upstairs in the National Gallery, I've talked it up with a guard or two. I have opined. They have opined. It's been in the smaller museums, however, I've had what to me were wonderful, even lengthy conversations with guards about what it's like to stand all day with paintings, about this and that subject, about the nature of museum guarding. Down the street from our hotel in London was the Wallace Collection. I had a brief, but ultimately revelatory conversation with a guard. He offered succinct, wry anecdotes, which I wrote down on hotel stationery. His account caught something of the emotional and physical claustrophobia of museum guarding—how to deal with that? What's a guard's tolerances? What's a guard's methodology for coping, hours on end, with a painting you find so unbearably beautiful it puts you in a state of distraction? Let's say you learn to be in that room, but not ever ever look directly at the painting. The full spectrum of responses. The inward and outward life. And like any writer I slowly filled notebooks with plots turns, dialogue, description.

MH: Was there any one sentence uttered by a museum guard that you knew right away was useful?

HN: One guard said, "We once had an incident with a Cupid." Someone accidentally damaged—very very slightly—a painting that depicted a Cupid. He called it an "incident." It seemed at first melodramatic, but then, later, I thought, well compared to the redundant activity, the quiet, the civility he mostly experienced, a slight mishap might seem as an incident.

MH: You have been a judge in the fiction category for the National Book Awards, the PEN

Faulkner Prize, and several granting foundations. Which books are on your night table?

HN: Over the last two years—always poetry. I've been in turn mesmerized and disturbed by a recently published volume of Chinese poetry, translated by my Vermont neighbor, David Hinton, who is our best translator of ancient Chinese poetry. Its title is *The Late Poems of Meng Chiao*. Dark, even menacing poems, wind sharpening rocks and so forth. Nature as engendering vigilance, not merely wide-eyed wonder or worship. Wallace Stevens—well, here goes a list. This isn't a personal canon, just a list. Paul Celan; difficult, masterful, haunting investigations into what language can do. W.S. Merwin; if you've read *Travels*, a wonderful collection. David St. John; totally unique. I always want to see what direction he's going in. My old dear friend Jerome Rothenberg; his poetry and anthologies. Every year I re-read all the books of Junichiro Tanizaki and Kawabata, the Japanese authors who gained notoriety between the two world wars. I keep returning to them. One of my favorites is Tanizaki's tale of unrequited love, *Naomi. I Served the King of England* by Hrabal, a masterful Czech writer. Max Frisch—all the time, his novels, of which my favorite is *Montauk*, and his journals. Natalia Ginzburg. One's personal library is so idiosyncratic, isn't it? I recently took four or five Simenon novels—I'd never read him—on a short trip, and admired how his stories unfold so logically, the narrative strategies pared down. Compelling odds and ends one happens upon: *The Film Explainer*, a novel by Gert Hofmann, I liked very much. The novels of the Dutch writer Cees Noteboom. Thomas Pynchon has a new novel out soon, *Mason and Dixon*—can't wait. A novel of his is an historical moment. Sometimes I obsessively follow translators. I keep close to what they are translating and try to read it. Lydia Davis, a wonderful writer of her own stories and novels, is a splendid translator too; most recently, I found her translation of *The Desert World*, by the French author Pierre Jean Jouve, very powerful. Michael Henry Heim, who translates from Czech and other languages; if Michael's translated it, I'll read it right away, soon as I'm aware of it. The Estonian short stories and novels translated by Anselm Hollo, there's another example.

MH: *The Bird Artist* was reviewed everywhere, was one of *Time* magazine's Best Five Books, was optioned for the movies, is in 12 languages, and is selling extremely well in paperback. Given our literary culture—American and Canadian—this novel has more than survived. Did success create unforeseen anxieties?

HN: I was 46 when *The Bird Artist* was published. I simply am not entertaining—nor am I inhibited by—the most remote possibility of luck writ large, or determinably good fortune from one novel projected onto the next. Certainly I hope like crazy there's some sort of mild anticipation and expectation—a novel for me takes three or four years. So naturally I hope that people enjoy *The Museum Guard*. But as my wife Jane Shore says, you should write a book "only you can write"—meaning, don't try to please any con-

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"The thing one must remember, is that a painting can surprise a person. I have witnessed this a hundred times. More than a hundred times. The expression on the face changes. The person walks in, sees a painting, walks out. He or she might as well say, "Call me by a different name." They simply are no longer the same person. There's no way I can prove this of course. I just shrug. I'm a museum guard. I notice such things."

(SAN FRANCISCO)

vention whatsoever. Don't compromise your imagination. Don't write to please. Such platitudes usually collapse when spoken, ring hollow and false, don't they? But when privately judging your own work, you certainly know if you've written the best book you could write. That's what Jane means, I think; in her poetry she had an unmitigated fealty toward that principle, that instruction to the self. I hope for luck, critically and in the marketplace, and at the same time do not expect it. Beyond that, of course, the contingencies of a writing life can cause a nervous breakdown; paradoxically, it may prove in the end that only going deeper into one's writing can save you. A working philosophy might best be simple: write every day. For me, that's what generally happens.

MH: I saw a photograph of you taken in 1979. You were standing in front of the post office in Churchill, Manitoba. Was that when you were working on the translation of arctic stories? You appear to have a ponytail and there's a bunch of Inuit children in view.

HN: During a four or five month period—if I am referring to the same photograph—I was living in both Churchill, Manitoba and Eskimo Point, NW Territories. I spent much time with two remarkable raconteurs—wrong word. Mark and Moses Nuqac. Both were learned, rambunctious, prolific storytellers. Inventive. They kept within the formal parameters of subject matter and included in their tales all the most culturally vital information. But, stylistically and content-wise, they pushed the edges. I'm more cautious than to use the word "modern." But I'm thinking here of Mark Nuqac's versions of what I came to term his "Noah stories." These had to do with the Biblical Noah, a somewhat hapless character

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whose ark drifts into Hudson's Bay. Wild episodes occur. Moses, for years, like to sit in the front pew of any church he could get to, Anglican usually. He wasn't himself baptized. He liked to hear Biblical stories, then impose his own sensibility—I'm tempted to say his "tribe's sensibility," an historical outlook—on these stories. What he'd come up with is truly genius. Wonderful variations on the theme of cultural collision. The plot line was generally this: it's a time of great tension, just before the freeze-up, polar bears restless and dangerous all up and down the coastline. The weather's been bad, villagers are starving, big snow storms on the way. Inuit are out hunting woolly mammoths, one of which can feed a village for a month. And in bumbles Noah and his family—he's got a shipload of exotic—edible—animals. Noah's big mistake is that he hoards the animals, and can't fathom that local etiquette demands that he share. Often at the end of Moses's "Noah stories," Noah is exiled, the ark sinks.

MH: You played some tape-recordings of Inuit stories for Glenn Gould, I'm told. And you mentioned his "Solitude Trilogy" recordings tonight, too.

HN: In a recording studio—middle of the night—radio station, Toronto. Yes—I didn't know he was going to be there. He just was. And he liked the stories.

MH: Lastly, Howard, what projects are in progress?

HN: The completion of *The Museum Guard*, which is the only thing, really. When it's finished—here comes the future tense again. If that gets completed, I'd like sometime to write an essay—I think it'll be that—about Robert Frank's Nova Scotia photographs, which are my favorite of his, or at least the ones that haunt me most. There's a children's book about a kid whose job it is to go door to door in a small town and try and locate phenomenally overdue library books; he runs into all sorts of stories and colorful local histories. There's a forthcoming collection of 10 Inuit tales called *The Girl Who Dreamed Only Geese*. I'm editing about 10 years of intermittent interviews with Peter Matthiessen; we've met in all sorts of places and record conversations—initially, that'll be for the *Paris Review*. A screenplay based on my story "Jenny Aloo." If I'm not hit by a locomotive, I'd like to get to that novel in a year or so, *Photographing Souls*. Thanks for asking, I wish you hadn't.

MH: Such a worried guy. I'll have that cup of coffee now. Thank you for having this conversation with me.

Margaritte Huppert is a freelance reporter and book reviewer. Her writing has appeared in many journals and newspapers in Canada, the U.S., and Australia. She divides her time between Montreal and London.

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EMERALD

by Mark Doty

Bureaus angled like ziggurats,
round-mirrored vanities in African veneers:
today they're taking Franco's furniture away,

art deco stuff the auction workers haul
into a long van chrome as this severe
afternoon, the clouds harshly pearly.

He's been dead two months, and his things
—shy, in daylight, self-consciously
moderne—can't help but call him back:

summer nights he'd come dashing out
in his tuxedo, practically leaping into
the flame of his little convertible, driving

the four blocks to his restaurant,
its motto unforgettable and just:
We don't do anything simply at Franco's.

From my kitchen window I'd see
his red kitchen glow, when he'd cook
for the handsome Quebecois boys

he loved. Too sick to work, the last
six months or so, he closed the restaurant.
Restless, sanguine as his little car,

he went right to work, converting
his apartment to a gallery
of zigzag *objets*, another era's

streamlined embodiments
of artifice—a style which doesn't,
so to speak, bother to color its roots.

He hammered and painted,
hung out signs—though the important part,
plainly, was not business

(these things too precious
and unlikely to sell) but pleasure.
The wooden sign was pink and gray.

The bronze nude—who used to make
a display of herself in the restaurant garden,
lithe, longnecked, arms flung straight

at heaven—moved to Franco's lawn,
and at Christmas someone hung a wreath
around her neck, which made her look chilly.

He had pneumocystis again and again.
In January her bronze breasts seemed blue.
Is it true, that death makes a mockery

of style? In today's obituaries,
no surprise, the same grinding news:
here's another man I barely knew,

one who used to dance at the A-House,
the writer says, *in the seventies*,
with a tambourine, long red hair streaming,

and around his neck, always, his favorite
emerald. I've read that story again
and again: *He loved his collection*

of sparkling beads, no one could forget
the dinners he used to host under the trees . . .
Death mock style? Think of Franco,

coughing in his gallery, not tired,
constructing his universe of display.
Beauty's also a matter of power,

a way to say, *Look, this I make.*
What's identity but a forged glamor?
Isn't it style that mocks death?

Listen, dears,
it's early yet, the moon not yet risen;
she's still smoking in her room,
considering the evening's attitude

and maquillage, what false
unreadable names to scrawl
on the harbor tonight.
Time to dress, loves, time to choose

your signatures: time for the flattering,
the revelatory, time to conceal,
time for the rhinestones, the wigs,
a little blush? Would you prefer

these leathers' polished gestures,
poses and trappings of severity?
Don't you miss desire? Phantoms,
its yours, the summer evening perpetual:

time to go out, time to appear
beneath the warm lights' enchantments,
Time for shattered docklights
on the waterfront's oily satin,

*the dark opening to admit us.
How far could you go?
This town's endless, avenues
and bowers, shadowy piers inviting*

*a kiss or gestures less personal but
no less tender. Don't you miss longing?
This haunted town's unrolled
under a knowing moon: our accomplice,*

*benevolent jade, she's the only one
who won't be seduced. Come back
in your great and snaking chain,
come back scorched and whirling,*

*you handsome wraiths
unspooling yards of figured silk,
nameless now, countless, memory stitched
like some lavish Oriental tattoo,*

*dragon of hurrying shades
attended by your retinues, surrounded
by your accoutrements—deco, emerald
the radiant beads—*

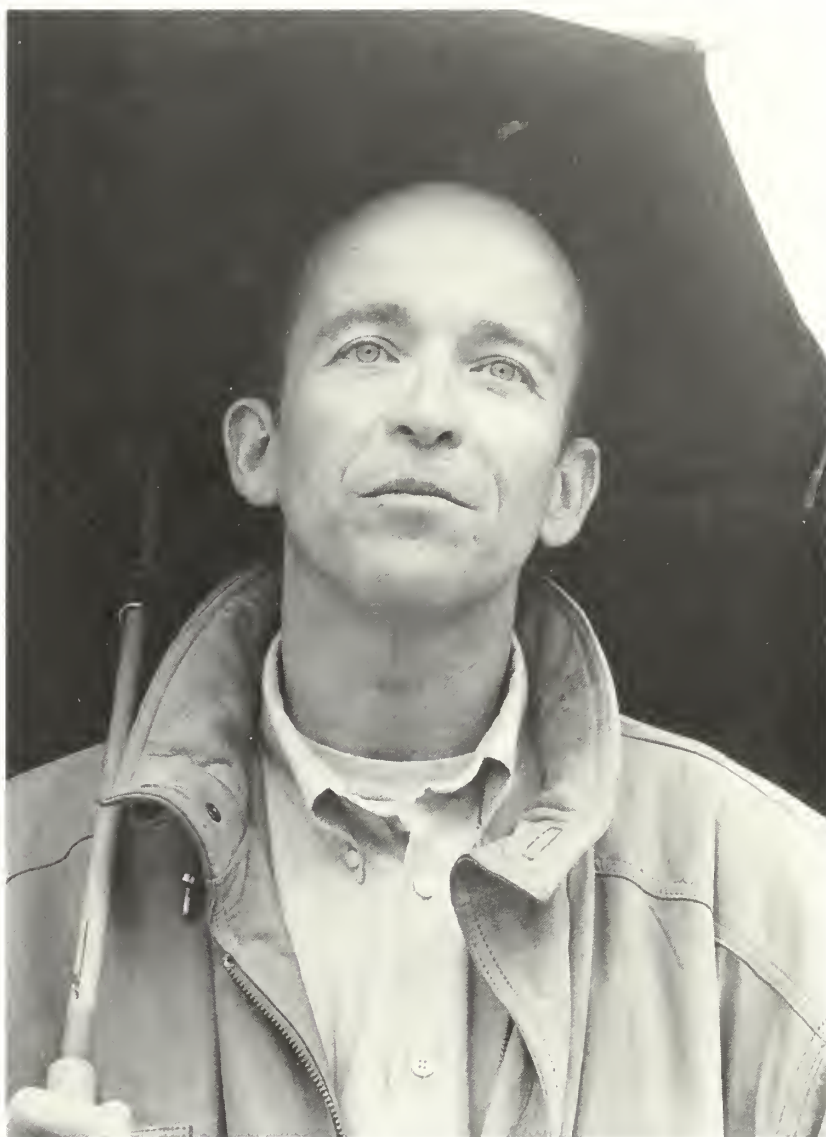
with which you made
yourselves. My emerald, you understand,
this flashing thing I've made of you,

—of him, of them. I thought I heard,
a little, murmurous voicings, laughter
across the water, hiss of fireworks

whispered somewhere behind the flares.
But there aren't any skyrockets here,
just that bit of burning hung

in these high bare branches, a winter lantern
above these gray and boarded streets.

Town so empty, off season,
you'd think that everybody'd died.



MARK DOTY PHOTO BY RENATE PONSOLD

*Mark Doty, the cover feature of Provincetown Arts
in 1994, is the author most recently of Heaven's
Coast, reviewed in this issue.*

THREE PROVINCETOWN MORNINGS

by Gail Mazur

When I lift the window shade
the first blue heron, feeding alone,
stationed in the shallows.

He's early—he must be—great bird
of winter. This last week of August,
his pale face is beautiful bad news.

All summer I meant to write differently,
to find a vocabulary for this harbor,
its excitable transient birds, the dunes

where, twelve years from his death,
Thoreau wrote, *It is wisest to live
without any definite and recognized object*

day to day. Reading that late last night,
I thought, Who'd match him for laziness?
But I knew it wasn't laziness

when I pictured him on the outer shore,
bent to his notebook, transfigured
by the cold Cape sun, each moment

equal to him in brilliance, in variation . . .

Uninhibited, unedited, the bay
does its green job,
pale and calm as celadon.

Thousands of species teem—invisible
green pastures of plankton,
infinite food factory.

Must *everything* have a purpose?
Even the cool sand sifting
through my warm fingers?

And these hands, is there a task
they're fit for, one that matters?
My own grabbling for *gravitas*

unapparent to the world
as oceanic life seems—
indecipherable, abstract

viewed like this from the shore . . .

Who'd argue with me if I said
the tide speaks in the voice of Horace:

*The years as they pass phunder us
of one thing then another?*

I would—this tide tells me nothing,
or rather, barefoot in the sand,

I propose a voice tide never needed
as it brings in sea glass, seaworms,

gray water from Canadian cruise ships.
Then goes back for more. People

like me, facing the bay's glistening
severity, want incident: swimmers,

silvery minnows, sailing ketches—want
to hear an aphorism, a wave of wisdom.

Here's half a man's shoe, wet and barnacled—
I press it to my ear, as if I'm listening.

Gail Mazur, the author of three books of poetry, most recently *The Common* (University of Chicago Press), is a member of the Writing Committee of the Fine Arts Work Center.

TITIAN'S BLUE PAJAMAS

by Sarah Blake

Blueberries split open by an August sun,
blue heat and cedar, drunken
bluebottle flies hover above the fruit
like oil shimmering on hot tarmac,
back-lit smoke coils above the couple
leaning towards each other in the vinyl booth,
his hand under the table sliding up her thigh,
she begins to glisten open as the singer's
wide mouth slows her last note
holding the wave, flat blue of a moonless
sea, slate of stilled motion, the painter
staying his stroke between cerulean blue
and bleu passé, bleu Louise qui chante
alone behind her pulled shades
so he can trace only her dark shape
as it moves, slate-blue, across the windows,
a new soul carrying its just-lost life
in a trace of pigment, a blue fade.

*Sarah Blake's poems have appeared recently in the
Threepenny Review and the Woman's Review of Books.
She is currently at work on a novel.*

COME NOVEMBER'S SLANT OF LIGHT

by Max Eberts

and snow that falls
like darkened hours—they know
to find hidden hollows and earthen wombs.

Come December's solstice—
its wintery brooms that sweep away all light—
they shroud themselves in silent solace.

And while the land is sleeping,
Northern Lights are leaping—
brain scans of the wild's dreaming.

*Max Eberts is a recent graduate of Rice University. His
poems have been published in Poetry and Southern
Poetry Review. He is the editor of Collegium, a magazine
published by the University of Houston.*

LUCIAN FREUD'S BATHROOM

by Daisy Friedman

A pen and ink morning poem
in the round mirror a reflection
of something, a windowsill?
an upside-down flowerpot?
On the bottom of the page
the statement (and later
the title) I miss you.
The vague apparatus of
plumbing, sewage, and sex.
There is a broom leaning
near the sink, and a sponge.
A doorknob high up
on the door:
a way out, all the same.
On the wall above the tub
a childlike drawing
(just so we don't take
ourselves too seriously:
some art within the art).
There is a box containing
cleanser or bubble bath
and it is on that
that he drew
the face of a man.

Daisy Friedman has published poems in Bomb, Mudfish, and Confrontation, and has a prose-poem forthcoming in the Paris Review.

NOVEMBER LETTER TO PROVINCETOWN

by Jon Loomis

All day this aqueous twilight, *tonk, tonk*
of rain on the trashcans, half under the eaves.
Last night was colder, and clear—rats

in the dumpster, lunar eclipse like communion
taken in small bites. It's always like this,
smell of wet leaves in the gutter, short days

and the low slope of light—only spring
with its slim fingers makes us forget.
I've dreamed of the house in Afton—

tall hedge knitted with morning glory,
cows in their seaside jog on the hill.
What if I let myself in, once, when you

and your husband were gone? What if I lay
on your neat bed, took off my clothes?
It must feel like winter, now, on the Cape—

the ocean's mumble and slide unattended.
I see you at work in your study, the same rain
falling. A mug of green tea on the desk.

Steam rising—my breath in the cold room.

Jon Loomis, director of the summer program at the Fine Arts Work Center, has published poems in Field, the Virginia Quarterly Review, and other journals.

LATE NIGHT REFLECTIONS FROM MY STUDIO AT THE WHITE HORSE INN IN PROVINCETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS IN THE MIDDLE OF APRIL

by Michael Stephens

Linguica soup and salad and conversation
after a gallery opening
and the grime of Boston washes off
like wax from a store apple.

At night I am alone with my thoughts,
and my thoughts are alone with the world,
and the world is off in the distance
because Provincetown is always that way.

Years ago I worked on ships.
And years ago I used to live here, too.
Now I am getting older than I ever imagined
I would become, given how I lived,
and I can't remember the person I was

Who always reeled home drunk from the bars,
cursing the world for not recognizing him.
The man I was will always be drunk.
The person who I am is another story completely.

Sometimes I even rub myself the wrong way,
wanting to punch myself in the nose.
But tonight I am at one with my onliness,
and at peace with the alone of the night.

Good night, Gracey. Good night, Mrs. Callabash.
See you in the morning, Tonto.
Adios amigos, this is your old pal, Hopalong.
Buona notte, Uncle Willie and Mamie Mullins.
So long, little school girl.

*Michael Stephens is the author of 15 books, including the novels
The Brooklyn Book of the Dead and Season at Coole; the
memoir Lost in Seoul; the essay collection Green Dreams; and
the play Our Father. His memoir "Fritz Bultman and Myron
Stout" appeared last year in Provincetown Arts.*

A WATERFALL

by Rodney Gove Dennis

The curtain lifts its skirt at night in my summer bedroom
as shy as if it knows I thought a poem
about my daughter's wedding which is all fiction.

Far across the sea an African river falls
from a great height to a smoky shallow.
The struck water smokes back again to heaven,

and new waves cover the rocks and the sandy bottom
shining up new shields and levels heaped abroad
with grey light slanting and almost keeping hidden

the occasional roundness and wet cloth and the
light grey shapes and curves and, I think, a head
of a person and then the stomach of another.

It's like a shallow heap of lead medals
shining far off. But it's like a daughter
and it's like a humorous uncle, a mother's favorite,

and a terrible cry is rising up from an African village
I did not know I possessed, and I will surely bless
the waterfall, but it does not avail to cover,

for there is nothing that will assuage and there is no place
for any kind of domestic thing. There is
the gleaming leaded Future of the Black Folk coming true.

*Rodney Gove Dennis retired in 1992
as Curator of Manuscripts in the Harvard
College Library. He is the author of a
chapbook, Carolyn (Harlequin Ink).*

FEAST DAY DAWNING, CAPE COD

for Heidi & Roger & Marisa

by Eamon Grennan

In my dream someone is humming *Amazing Grace*
and that's when I wake this Thanksgiving morning
to a clear sky that's luminous lemony peach
at the horizon, small cobalt clouds puffed up in it
like currachs, the tide far out, the sandflats with foraging ducks
a place of patched luminosities and plenitude, feeding
the innocent. The morning's a uniform glow of swollen light
that seems to last forever on the horizon, widening and
widening it until the whole sky—where last night Orion
hung armed in the iron dark, his belt of hammered stars
and his gleaming hand as hard and stubborn as someone
in Homer—is a lake of molten light, a great courtyard, all
its brazen gates gaping on a vision of things to come.

*Eamon Grennan has published widely in magazines and is
the author of What Light There Is (North Point Press, 1989).
He is a professor of English at Vassar College and spends
his leave-time in Ireland.*

JOURNAL ENTRIES, 1996

by Diane Wald

No one knows nothing and I am sad. Then later in the afternoon, not so much so. I'm caught in a cold summer thunderstorm, taking shelter against the hot brick of a building. At lunch D. described both his mother and his wife. When he met his wife, she did not speak English. They managed to talk about whales on the beach. He says he's his mother's favorite. She once had a psychic, but he recently died of AIDS. All during his conversation I am delighted, forgetting my recent reservations about D. He and his wife and daughter bought a boxer pup in Ontario and they have not cropped his ears; I am moved by this. And yet all during the conversation I am struck by the fear inherent in men—not so much in women. I begin to wonder if men can only be touched in certain places.

*

I could see the words behind the paper, the words that weren't there. I could not exactly see them; they were forming and dissolving and reforming faintly, just under the surface of the paper the way blood flows faintly just under wrist skin. They must have been impossible to say; they couldn't be allowed to come up yet. Womb-words. A delicate screen. I could have put my hand out, palm up, could have let the words leap in.

*

I cannot clear up the misunderstanding of being in love, even after eating several pieces of his soup. Too many jets go by, with a sound like minds tearing. C. plays tenderly with my face, hangs it on the wall of his office.

*Diane Wald's The White Horse Love Poems
will be published this year by Owl Creek Press.
She lives in Boston.*

SIGHTSEEING IN PROVINCETOWN

by May Swenson

If your elbow were an eagle's head
and your loins the mouth of a cat
its tongue many ripped tongues of flame

and if your ribs were the membranous wings of a dragon
and if one leg were of black leather
the bloody claw of a chicken grafted to the knee

and if your buttocks were the cheeks of a laughing insane face
the lips clasp a trumpet
from which wasps were flying the wasps' eyes clearly seen

glossy with mad hilarity and if although you were male
your left breast were a large pale polyp
with numerous nipples and the other breast a dog's head

its jaws straining to swallow a severed thigh
and if from your slick head that of a rhinoceros
with inrolled eyes there curved instead of a snout

a snake with a fishhook through its neck
and if rags of flame flew from your navel
it being the unhinged door of a furnace

and if looking down
you saw a cat's mouth between your legs
giving birth to the dripping lower half

of a face whose skin peeled back hung from the earlobes
with raw lips stretched in a sonorous scream
and if in the gullet's vortex there bobbed

a tiny figure scalded red a Janus-faced child
both girl and boy impaled through one armpit
by a tooth then you'd be elected

Chief Lucifer of S. H. Masters' Hell
the colors like flesh like silk like fruit
under an exceptionally clear patina smooth as petunia

"The Last Judgment" (Austria c. 1480)
gilt-framed on a plum-velvet-covered wall
in Provincetown 1965



MAY SWENSON, WELLFLEET, 1959

"Sightseeing in Provincetown" appeared in May Swenson's 1967 collection, Half Sun Half Sleep, and has been long out of print. For permission to publish, we are grateful to Mariamne Milton, on behalf of the literary estate of May Swenson. Mariamne Milton is the author of "May Swenson and the Natural Pulse of Lesbian Passion," published last fall in the Lesbian Review of Books.

ELEGY FOR JANE KENYON (2)

by Jean Valentine

Jane is big
with death, Don
sad and kind—Jane
though she's dying
is full of mind

We talk about the table
the little walnut one
how it's like
Emily Dickinson's

But Don says No
Dickinson's
was made of iron. No
said Jane
Of flesh.

NOVEMBER

November
leaving Ireland

Sligo Bay and the two mountains
the female and the male
walking down the stairs
into the ground

—I have to leave
and I have to watch.

THEY MAKE LOVE

They make love
touch hands
their hands stick

—Do not wash:
this is the hand
that drew Eve from Adam
Adam out of Eve
the hand that made
you out of you.

Jean Valentine's most recent book of poetry, Growing Darkness, Growing Light, was reviewed last year in Provincetown Arts.



History

Listening to Aunt Myrtle, who must be close to ninety, is like being wrapped again in the layers of newspapers and sweaters with which his mother used to swaddle him when his grandfather came by to take him pickerel fishing through the ice. These ancient women—aunts in the name of longevity and the fact that practically everybody in the old part of town is distantly related—wield memory with an authority that turns Maushop men like Eben into the boys whose obligations have been defined for generations by matriarchal edict. Wearing the all-white uniform of his trade—a cook's popover-shaped cap, ducks, and jacket—Eben stands behind the breakfast counter of his restaurant, nodding dutifully in the scrutiny of the black triangular eyes that sit in Aunt Myrtle's leathery face like gabled windows as she reminds him that the old Indian church needs a new roof. Since it is after ten in the morning, he is edgy with the knowledge that in the kitchen behind him are flounder to be fileted, quahogs to be shucked, potatoes diced, and onions sliced, if the chowders for which the Herring Run Grill has become celebrated on upper Cape Cod are going to be ready in time for the luncheon crowd.

"I'm working on it, Aunt Myrtle," he says. "I'm waiting for a donation from the Council."

"Then you'll be waiting till I eat young roast skunk again," the old lady declares, knowing that he knows as well as she that this year's Council is not only broke, but also dominated by traditionalists who advocate a return to the old ways—drumming, dancing, weaving baskets and such—and have little use for religion. "What we need is bingo," she tells him. "Like other tribes. And the sooner the better."

Aunt Myrtle is alluding to the Pequot, of Connecticut, who, backed by Malaysians, have parlayed a bingo license into ownership of one of the largest and most profitable gambling casinos in all of North America, and also to the Gay Head, of Martha's Vineyard, and the Narragansett, of Rhode Island, who are said to be negotiating similar deals with financiers from Las Vegas, Singapore, and other exotic places.

Eben places his palms upon the counter, leans forward, and, speaking slowly and firmly, tries to make the old lady understand that bingo is not an option for the Maushops, who lost their bid to achieve recognition as a legally constituted tribe in a land-claim lawsuit that was tried in Boston ten years earlier. "The state won't allow us to run a bingo game unless we're recognized," he explains.

Since this is not what Aunt Myrtle wants to hear, she gives him a look almost as baleful as the one he remembers her giving the attorney hired by the white selectmen of the town, who, seeking to cast doubt upon the authenticity of the Indian land claim, asked her during cross examination if she knew the significance of the letter "M" that could be found beside the names of her paternal and maternal grandparents in the 1890 census, and, upon receiving the negative answer he expected, turned away from her to face the jury announcing as he did that the letter "M" stood for mulatto and that he had no further questions, before striding in triumph back to his chair into which he had sunk halfway before being skewered by the steel bolt of a fiercely quiet voice suggesting that the letter "M" could also be taken to stand for Maushop.

Now, all these years later, Eben feels the blood rush to his face as he remembers the furious applause that filled the courtroom and the judge's equally furious gavelling. "Try to understand, Aunt Myrtle," he says.

But she'll have none of his cajolery. "What about our petition?" she demands. "What are you doing about that?"

"It's still before the Bureau of Indian Affairs," he tells her, knowing that it has been turned down twice by the B.I.A. because of the trial verdict, and doesn't stand a chance. "Don't worry about the church roof, Aunt Myrtle. It'll get patched before winter."

Since Thanksgiving is almost upon them, this means he'll have to persuade some of the boys in town to give up a Saturday or two—no mean feat with the approach of deer hunting season, when men in Maushop take to woods and swamp.

"It got patched a year ago," the old lady says crossly.

"Best we can do, Aunt Myrtle, till we get some money."

She takes a step toward the door, but pauses to push a final button. "Aunt Mildred worshipped there," she reminds him.

"I remember," Eben says, and comes around to the front of the counter so he can help her out the door and down the walk to the pick-up in which her grand niece is waiting to drive her home. It was Aunt Mildred—Myrtle's long dead older sister and unofficial town historian—who had summoned him to her peeling clapboard cottage on the evening of the same bitter cold day he came home from the Army to tell him that she had decided he was going to be the next chief (a largely ceremonial post that hadn't been filled since Willard Thorne had fallen out of his oyster boat and drowned a decade earlier), and, taking no notice of his attempts to demur, sat him down by the wood stove in her kitchen, as she would every day for the next month, while she recited the provenance of the tribe as it can be found in stories that have been handed down in Maushop for more than three centuries.

Once Aunt Myrtle has gone, Eben returns to his kitchen to find Archie Namquoit coming across the back porch of the restaurant, elbow cocked, fingers crooked in the gills of a striped bass so large its tail drags on the floor boards.

"I'm guessing thirty-six," Eben says.

"Thirty-seven and a half," Archie tells him. "Give an ounce or two."

"How about forty dollars?"

"Make it forty-five and I'll throw in a bluefish who got a late start south."

While Eben is taking the money out of the cash register on the breakfast counter, the telephone rings. It's Molly Shires, a reporter from the *Barnstable Bugle*, who calls whenever there's a story that has to do with the Maushops, and always around Thanksgiving when she's about to write the newspaper's annual piece on the presently impoverished Indians whose ancestors provided the bounty for which the holiday was initially celebrated. Last year, she wanted to know how Eben felt about the discovery at the

town disposal area of a burlap bag containing Maushop bones that had been unearthed by bulldozers carving a golf course out of the last remaining portion of scrub forest on Pine Point that hadn't been subdivided into cul de sacs with names like Warrior Trace and Wampanoag Way.

"How do I feel?" Eben had said with a laugh. How d'you think the people up in America's home town would feel if a developer named Attaquam was scooping up the bones of Elder Brewster's kinfolk with a backhoe and carting them off to the dump?"

This time Molly wants to talk to him about the impending settlement of a wrongful death suit brought against the town by the family of Edgar Webqueet, who was shot to death four years ago by a white Maushop policeman named Millerston. Following an inquest, the policeman was exonerated by a state judge who decided that the evidence validated his story that the Webqueet boy, who had been drinking, had tried to run him down after being stopped for speeding, and that Millerston's firing of ten shots from his semi-automatic pistol—six of them through the driver's side window at a range of about three feet—had constituted reasonable force in self defense. As might be expected, the event has caused tension between the Maushops and their white neighbors, and been the subject of numerous meetings between the selectmen and members of the Maushop Indian Council, who want the selectmen to dismiss Millerston from the police force.

"Remind me how much they're offering to settle for," Eben says.

"Three hundred and fifty thousand."

"And who is it wants to settle?"

"Stop putting me on, Eben. You know perfectly well it's the insurance company for the town."

"So what's there to talk about?"

"Well, now that a settlement's in the offing and the selectmen appear to be ready to get rid of Millerston I was wondering if the Council intends to take down the sign that's been up on the lawn in front of the old church for the past three years."

"You mean the sign that went up the day after the Webqueet boy was shot?"

"Is there another one?" Molly asks.

"The one that starts 'You take our land.'"

"You pollute our waters," Molly says, as if she's reciting a litany.

"Now you kill our people.' As it happens, I'm meeting with the selectmen tomorrow afternoon to discuss that very matter."

"Why I called you," Molly says. "The selectmen say the meeting's going to be closed to the press and public."

"In that case, they'll be discussing things among themselves."

"Does that mean you'll get me in?"

"If you bring your camera and put a photograph of our sign on the front page," Eben tells her. "To go with a story of how the members of the Maushop Indian Council have agreed to take it down."

He hangs up before Molly can reply, pays Archie Namquoit his forty-five dollars, and starts to filet the bluefish.

Archie is watching him with the grave expression he always wears, whether he has hooked a big striper out on the Sound, is setting out muskrat traps along the Quashmet River, or sitting dead drunk in his one-room trailer on Saturday night. "Isn't it time we did something about the coyotes?" he inquires.

Eben gives a shrug, runs his filleting knife along the backbone of the bluefish. "Getting to be a problem are they?"

"Took one of the selectmen's dogs the other night. Come up on the back porch while him and his wife and kids were out to the movies and ate the animal right off its leash."

Eben skins a bluefish filet with a fluid stroke of his knife. "Which selectman was that?"

"Bradley."

"Bradley vote to fire the cop that shot Edgar Webqueet?"

"Not that I remember," Archie says.

"Go along with our request for special herding rights?"

"Nope."

"Support the proposal to let our young people keep dancing and drumming down by the lake?"

"I guess not."

"Then why worry what happens to his poodle?"

"It was some kind of terrier, Eben. A wire hair, I think."

"A wire hair," Eben says. "Now that makes all the difference."

"His wife and kids really loved the dog. Besides, Bradley says the town'll pay me a bounty for every coyote I trap and kill."

So that's it, Eben thinks as, holding the bass by the tail above a trash barrel, he scrapes away silvery scales that fall like a shower of coins. "You ever heard the old proverb about a fish in the skiff being worth two coyotes in the bush?" he asks.

Archie gives the ghost of a smile, shakes his head.

"Big weekend coming," Eben tells him. "I could use a couple more like this one." When he looks up again, Archie has disappeared. Gone fishing, Eben hopes.

Along the lunchtime counter, there's more talk about coyotes, mostly because the fate of Selectman Bradley's terrier has made news on the morning radio out of Hyannis. Cats, it is said, have been disappearing right and left. Pet ducks are vanishing without a trace. The swans in the pond out front of the Sea Horse Inn in Sandwich are gone. A rash of sightings includes a suspicious-looking animal seen lurking on the penumbral periphery of a nighttime Little League soccer game in Harwich. Teachers are being urged to exercise special vigilance on playgrounds. The police in Chatham are supposed

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to have shot a German shepherd. Theory has it the coyotes are hitching rides on trucks carrying firewood in from Maine and New Hampshire. Someone claims to have seen a pair of them trotting bold as brass across the Sagamore Bridge in the middle of the night.

"Hobo coyotes," Eben tells professor Ottinger, who comes in late and lingers over coffee and a piece of pumpkin pie. "Tourist coyotes. What d'you make of it?"

"A year ago, people were worrying about an invasion of rabid raccoons," the professor reminds him. Elderly, retired, living year-round in what was once his summer home, he is the author of a highly regarded account of the bloody uprising instigated by the Wampanoag sachem Metacomet, a.k.a. King Philip, as well as a treatise entitled "The History of the Maushop Tribe," which is how he came to testify in behalf of the Indians at the trial in Boston.

"The selectmen want to put a bounty on them," Eben says.

"Won't do any good. Coyotes have been migrating eastward for the past 30 years. Apparently, they've kept their numbers up by breeding with farm dogs along the way."

"Survivors," Eben says. "Like us Maushops."

"You Maushops survived because you got religion in the nick of time," the professor replies. In this way, he manages to steer the conversation past the shoals of fact that, thanks to intermarriage—initially with slaves who had been freed and sent to live among them by the Abolitionists, and later with Negro servicemen who were stationed and segregated at a nearby Army camp during World War Two—there hasn't been a full-blooded Maushop living on the peninsula for many years, as well as to needle Eben about how his forbears escaped being slaughtered or sold into slavery in the aftermath of King Philip's War by placing themselves under the protection of white preachers, who called them Praying Indians.

"One of these days we'll have to rewrite that part of our legend," Eben says, "but not while my Aunt Myrtle's still alive."

"I thought she died."

"That was Aunt Mildred, the one who kept reminding us we were descended from Massasoit and Metacomet."

"Speaking of bounties," the professor says, "the settlers put a bounty on Metacomet, which is how he got betrayed and hunted down."

"Aunt Mildred told us about it. When she was little, one of her uncles took her to the place it happened. Somewhere in the woods near Taunton."

"Talk about vengeance," the professor says, sticking his fork into a piece of pumpkin pie. "After they killed him, they drew and quartered his body and left the quarters hanging from trees to rot. Then they brought his head to Plymouth and impaled it on a pole until the skull bleached white in the sun and wrens returned year after year to build nests in the sockets that once held eyes."

"Aunt Mildred was always asking when they were going to put a skull on top of the flagpole

at the Pilgrim theme park they got up there nowadays," says Eben, with a smile. "Claimed she wanted to hear those actors in bonnets and buckle shoes explain it to the tourists."

"What I'd like to see them reenact is how the forefathers thanked the Wampanoag who brought them a haunch of venison by stringing him up and flaying his heathen back for killing on the Sabbath."

"That's one I don't remember Aunt Mildred telling."

"Fosdick's *Early Annals*. Chapter Six."

"Old stuff," Eben says. "I've got trouble enough trying to deal with the problems of today."

"Too bad we can't put a bounty on the developers," the professor tells him. "I can hardly hear myself think for all the banging and screeching that's going on." He is complaining about the cacophony of hammering and skill-saw whining that accompanies the rock music blared by the battery-powered radios of an army of carpenters who have come from all over New England since the trial to build condos and weekend homes in the scrub forest that had been Eben's as a boy to roam as he pleased.

Eben gives a shrug. "What's left of the land belongs to them now."

"Stolen fair and square," says the professor, who testified how sharp-eyed real estate operators bought shares of common land from alcoholic members of the tribe, and then filed petitions for title to the choicest parcels at the land court up in Boston, knowing that they would get what they wanted through automatic forfeiture, since most of the abutters either would not be able to read the legal notices telling them to appear for a hearing on a certain day, or would be too poor or timid to leave town and travel to a city in which almost none of them had ever set foot.

"What we Maushops have to do is focus on the present," Eben tells him. "Keep the police from gunning down any more of our young people. Make our kids proud of their roots. Deal with the pollution coming out of the military base."

"I hear the selectmen want you to take down the sign in front of the old church."

"They're worried about the town's image. In other words, the tourist trade."

"You going to do it?"

"Depends. In addition to firing Millerston, we want them to set up a police advisory board with Maushop representation, increase funding for the Indian education program at the elementary school, and call for a moratorium on development near the base."

"Somebody told me the EPA's going to designate it as a Superfund site."

"The plume of sewage and chemicals coming out of there's half a mile long, a quarter of a mile wide, and a hundred feet deep. What else can they do?"

"Nothing," the professor replies, "except wait and see where it goes and how long it takes to get there."

"The best guess I've heard is Falmouth in the first part of next century," Eben says.

The professor shakes his head. "Imagine those knuckle-heads in the National Guard and Air Force dumping that much waste and aviation fuel into the ground without a thought about where it might be going."

"How about Archie warning everybody not to fish in Jacob's Pond after he saw stuff bubbling out of the spring at the north end? That was ten years before the developers put up houses at the water's edge. Now the people who live in them are drinking bottled water."

"I suppose you know the Wampanoag had sense enough not to build their shelters next to lakes or rivers," the professor says. "Let alone dump excrement into them."

"Look where it got us," Eben tells him.

The meeting with the selectmen takes place at Eben's suggestion on neutral ground—in this case, a conference room in the public library, which is part of a neo-Colonial mall that houses the town hall, a post office, the police and fire stations, a supermarket, and several smaller stores. The mall was built soon after the Maushops lost the land-claim lawsuit, and it is situated in a section of town that is about as far as one can get from the Indian village and the old church. On hand besides Eben are three of the town's five selectmen—including Bradley, a white-bearded contractor who is chairman of the board, and a recently elected woman member—as well as the town attorney, a lawyer for the policeman's union, the lawyer for the Webqueet family, the mother and father of the slain Webqueet boy, and Molly Squires, who has tried to make herself inconspicuous by sitting at the back of the room.

Bradley looks from her to Eben and then down at a piece of paper. "The reason we suggested this meeting be closed is that there are things in your letter of proposal that can't be acted upon immediately. For example, although we're ready to seek Corporal Millerston's dismissal for misconduct, it'll have to go to arbitration, which promises to be a long drawn-out proceeding even if there's no appeal. Plus there's no way we can do anything about these other demands without first calling for a special town meeting and getting the approval of the voters."

"Fine with us," Eben tells him. "We're for the democratic process same as you."

"Unfortunately, the majority of voters in this town aren't likely to support a moratorium on development," the selectwoman says.

"And we intend to fight tooth and nail against any review board," the attorney for the police union declares.

"As for the Indian education program," Bradley continues, "the school superintendent has promised to look at the budget and do what he can."

Knowing that this is probably the best he's going to get, Eben casts a questioning glance at Edgar Webqueet's parents, who turn to their attorney.

"The family has accepted the town's settlement offer and wishes to have some closure on this whole business," the attorney says.

Bradley looks at Eben. "What d'you say? Can we put it behind us?"

"You mean let it become history."

"Whatever," Bradley says.

"The Council will agree to remove the sign," Eben tells him, "not to put what happened behind us but to spare the Webqueets from being reminded of it every time they drive past the church."

"The board appreciates that," Bradley replies.

"In return the members want the Council to know that we intend to work in a new spirit of cooperation with the Native American citizens of this community. In fact, we'd like to ask your assistance in dealing with some unwelcome predators that have recently come to town."

"I heard about your dog," Eben says.

"Yes, well, before the situation gets out of hand we thought we'd put a bounty on these coyotes. Encourage your people to help us get rid of them."

"Because of our great prowess as hunters."

Bradley frowns, strokes his beard. "No offense intended."

"First you take our land," Eben tells him with a smile. "Now you want us to make it safe for your pets."

Bradley shakes his head in protest. "Not at all what I meant. Truly."

"Don't worry," Eben says. "We're not going to put up another sign. We're not going to become the town's exterminators either."

"What should we do about the coyotes?" the selectwoman wants to know.

"Live and let live," Eben tells her.

On the way back to the restaurant, he stops by the old church so that Molly Shires can take a photograph of him standing beside the sign and its boldly lettered accusations. Except for the trace of a smile that tugs at the corners of his mouth, he appears to be looking into the camera lens without expression. Dusk is falling. Over in Connecticut, the newly wealthy Pequots are donating huge sums to charity. Up in Plymouth, Mayflower descendants live in the shadow of sirens waiting to wail warning of a meltdown at Pilgrim Nuclear. In the Indian burial ground behind the church, a pair of gray canines can be seen streaking like ghosts among lichen-covered headstones.

"Any comment?" Molly inquires. "I could use something for the picture caption."

"Happy Thanksgiving," Eben says.

Paul Brodeur, a staff writer at the New Yorker for many years, is the author of three books of fiction and eight books of nonfiction, including the memoir, Secrets: A Writer in the Cold War, published this spring by Faber and Faber. He lives in Truro.

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Camp

One summer when I was 18 I was standing down in the browning yellow of Filene's Basement reading the paper. I was looking for opportunities to get out of Boston for the summer. It seemed I could work at a summer camp. I'd make no money, but I wouldn't be here. It seemed like a sin, a crime to work in the city in the summer in the bowels of a department store.

My mother and sister dropped me off at an overnight camp in New Hampshire. Camp Marlin. It's where I met Jilda Breed. Though I was only 18 I was already an adult condemned to re-enact the childhood she had never had. I wanted to go to overnight camp. I wanted to be dropped off by my parents with my bags. As it turned out I was the youngest counselor who was assigned to the oldest cabin. I was 18, they were 14. I often feel that this experience turned me into a homosexual.

I would stand in Filene's Basement considering the spectacle of my first year of college, school. It bore no resemblance to the future I had imagined. My present education illustrated how faulty my understanding of life was. I saw it as a series of projected images I would magically begin to inhabit. The images were based on the past—college, some bunch of bright young people in sweaters dashing up the steps to astronomy class, something I saw in movies, teevee—Ozzie & Harriet college, because no one I knew had ever gone. So when I began college the future was dashed to bits by the present. Now it meant suburban buses connecting to the T and then down into the red line and the orange line and the green line to a bunch of reclaimed buildings in Park Square—Salada Tea, the Old Boston Gas Co. We would sit in coffee shops and drink our bleary morning coffee and see the first street people we had ever laid eyes on. An old woman pulled up her skirt for us and showed us her bald old pussy. We were going to school. There was an Irish bar around the corner where we'd go after jazz class and smell stale beer and a trio would play there on Friday afternoons, a really old man and a really old woman and some third thing. I can't remember, but I know it was a trio. They were so drunk, the music was incredibly bad and the only point to them was that they were old, so old that it was hilarious that they would try to pull off this kind of late afternoon soft shoe entertainment, and one afternoon they weren't there because one of them had died, and that was that. This could not be college, it was something else. Actually it was an introduction to bohemia, the seedy, the demimonde. So things were really as prophetic as they should be. I remember the smell of Sullivan's. Sweet decay. There was a guy not much older than us who usually wore a suit

jacket and white shirt and was enamored by City Hall politics and he always seemed to be in some kind of energized fog and it was later explained to me because sometimes you'd see him take his jacket off that he was an alcoholic, his drinking was a problem. How could somebody's drinking be a problem, in that old person's way already. I thought it was because of the way he dressed and the things he cared about. There was no campus. It was not school. I would sit in class and look for men that mattered, someone who belonged there as little as I did. I had chosen the school for its name. University of Massachusetts sounded all right. It wasn't, but I was living a life that I read, all these disappointing and confusing things would be perceived in a book, not one I wrote but one that was read and then it would then be okay, the world I was in. I imagined a book that forgave.

Because I could see that I was lost. Already, I had given up on college. I would continue to go to my classes and get a degree, but its meaning was open, it was simply happening, that's all. I know the present occasionally engulfs you and you stand there saying hey this will be the future, but you're wrong again, it's the present. It was like that with the Doors at Crosstown Bus. The lights blinking on the walls, the erotic man singing. A girl slightly skipping and swaying with her eyes half closed in a skirt in a way I could only faintly understand was sexy to me, but everything was carried in a wash of the already gratified request to "Let me sleep all night in your soul kit-chen," the meaning only barely breaking through, I was trying to contain her as Snoopy, the dancing girl with the man's voice reeling on, which was me. I sat in class and thought maybe him, maybe him. I was looking for a man to take me out, not literally, but who I could kind of ride in a parallel universe with like the dancing girl and the man's voice which I saw in my head again and again. It was kind of like my family who were never really there, where we were, but kind of about something else, like Martians. I wanted to go home, where I had never been.

This man, Peter Whitman, was sitting there in class, German class, and he was sort of blondish brown haired, tan complexion, slightly older I suspected, maybe a vet. One day I was sitting in the park. Our school was near Boston Common, the Gardens. If I sat there on a green bench reading a book I was somewhere between lunch on a part time job and being on a college campus. Sometimes I would watch the swan boats, be bothered by men, not much, and sometimes I would watch crazy people and feel sick. I was drawn to normality. The American institution. Peter Whitman walked by. Big boots that suggested he had been in the military. They all were like that, veterans, they all had one thing they held onto—the jacket, perhaps. My father was

like that too. I remember a gun in the front closet, a helmet. My mother would threaten us with his belt. Hi, I smiled. He sat right down. I can remember what I had on, an odd stretchy shirt with a collar and long sleeves but really tight and I rolled the sleeves up. It was dark blue but it faded and it was covered with swinging designs, like those boomerangs on formica table tops. They reminded me of the future, of atomic energy. Hi, he said. His face was tan and that's what I was doing. Tanning. At least you didn't have to look like the people in your school. Peter Whitman was out here too. Our orbits collided. I can't remember a word we said, but he was an adult. I figured something would happen after that, a date, but it didn't. Nothing happened. He was just an image.

All the girls in my cabin, Birch Lodge, had been to Europe. It felt weird. They could swim, they could ski, they had been to France and rode horses. The person most often miscast in my movie is me. The other counselor was Joyce. She was from Providence. You know I don't want to tell this much of a story. Joyce the tennis counselor. Short, stocky, Italian, a peasant type, with kind of something wrong with one of her eyes. I hated her. Maybe her pupil was gone in one eye. It was kind of all smeary blue. She was so good natured. Can we think about that phrase for a moment. We were swinging by trees in the car one day when I was barely an idea, very young. It was my mother and another woman—not familiar, then my brother. I was looking at the green of the trees whisking by like when you lie down in the back seat. I was thinking about the green. "Terry's a fat pig," I yelled out. We had company so I was testing what I could do in this altered setting. Maybe he would punch me or something. Terry smiled serenely which was sickening. He was showing off. He's so good natured groaned the woman in the front. I remember my little body filling with rage. Good natured had to do with trees which was not like Terry at all. He was like stones. Food. Glue. Meanness. I was "imaginative." She has such imagination said some other lady to my mother and I thought it was the time to point this out. "You should see some of the things I think up," I yelled out now. I was filled with the excitement of myself, my words, my ideas. I was nothing but breath and pride. Eileen, shush, said my mother. Terry smiled. Pretty soon we stopped, went someplace, maybe Westborough but I felt I was born that day, it's so vivid and new, the words and the feelings and pictures. The green, speeding and natural.

In the morning Joyce would come and touch my tits. She would come over and do this and I would pretend I was asleep and I would think of various people who it would be more interesting if they touched me in this swirling way

and I would fall back to sleep in a moist heat of sexual imagination. Always in these morning episodes I am a boy. When I lie there being touched by Joyce or anyone else. It's like I've looked at pictures of boys, Peter Pan, some young prince in a mustard colored jerkin in a framed picture on a wall in a relative's house, I've dreamed about these boys' erotic potential in the hands of bossy girls for so long I go right into a fugue state and join their ranks at the touch of a girl's hand. Though sometimes I am her. The girls in *Little Women* undressed Laurie on a regular basis and forced him to wear certain dandified outfits which were cuter, but conflicted with his stern sense of masculinity which was at war with his prettiness. This was a secret passageway I found in Louisa May Alcott's novel, and I elaborated on it endlessly for my brother who would frantically whip through the pages of the old red book and look for my strip scenes to no avail. My brother and I aroused each other verbally for years. In my family we talk a hot fuck. My brother's stories were true life adventures participated in by girls we both knew and these stories could never be authenticated. Mine were simply literary since I was such a baby I felt that no one would include me in the truth. I was glad to be a baby if I could be a boy undressed by many humiliating girls. After I began settling into life in Birch Lodge, Jilda arrived. I don't remember her parents at that point but I can stick them in now. A tall dark haired man in white shorts, and a sandy haired woman, nothing spectacular. Nice, nervous looking. In their thirties, I guess, right? Jilda was their kid.

I want one, I thought. She was adorable. A perfect girl boy. It was like in that moment I transferred my account from me to the world. I began to look out.

All I can remember about Jilda is a report I wrote. It was such a failed summer. I got a job as an arts & crafts counselor but I didn't know how to do anything. We had this big loft with a kiln, and tons of paints and high eaves. It was paradise. I wanted to get right down to work, draw and paint. Unfortunately I was stuck with them. I remember my partner, Jeannie McCloud, who seemed like a teacher or a librarian. Not an artist like me. Eileen, go look at their work she'd shove, and I'd shuffle around the loft, making cracks, being their cool older sister. Though Jeannie was furious I'd managed to convince her that she could do half the class, I'd do the other and the assignment invariably arrived in her half, work time in mine. I'd always work too and we'd talk a lot. Me and the girls. But mainly I was not into being there at all; it made me so sad that I was not an artist, had not gone away to school, or overnight camp. I'd put on my bathing suit and pout. Or rather, tan. As usual I was on a diet. I was best at being still. I was an endless teenager, striking a pose, being brilliant at that, at least. I brought a lot of books to camp. I was reading the trilogy (Tolkein). Having applied sufficient baby oil, I would lie down in my bikini on a lounge chair in the big porch around the main hall. I would listlessly read in the afternoon, occasionally one of the counselors going



EILEEN MYLES
PHOTO: DONA MCADAMS

by giving me shit—taking a little time off, Eileen. I would smile and flip them the cover of my book, the trilogy. *Cool*.

Occasionally Claudette Meier or Hugh would walk by. They were the boss couple. He had a crew cut, wore a white teeshirt and big chinos. Was an art teacher, ceramics, during the school year. It was their camp. Hugh was a handsome man, Claudette was butch, big glasses, jamaicas, thick muscled legs and carried herself as if she'd been in the military and now we were too. I was spotted as a loafer right away. Who could miss it. I thought reading a book was good, I thought getting a tan was, I had never even imagined that such a low paying job carried the burden of an ethos, that I had consented in some way to wear the camp uniform all day, green & white right from the moment of morning flag salute, Birch Lodge here. I hadn't realized we were theirs. I mean I read an ad in the *Boston Globe*: Camp Counselors Wanted. I got an application in the mail, I filled it out and returned it and they congratulated me that I got the job. And now for a stipend of \$250 they own me from morning to night. You've got to sneak around, one of the other counselors informed me. I didn't get it. I had an inferior sense of work. An hourly rate, nothing else. I certainly didn't understand conduct, not patriotic conduct. Not protestant patriotic conduct.

"Blood 'n guts," spouted Claudette, after a whiskey or two at the cook-out. That's what this country was built on. "I hate blood and guts," I spit back, having had a few beers myself. "Well you better learn to love it if you're going to get anything done in this life. Nothing gets done without a lot of sweat and effort," she said nearly seething at me and I felt this had to do with lying around in a bikini and she never spoke to me again after that. Certainly never said my name. Occasionally a crisp hello which seemed to merely grease her stride as she marched around surveying her lands in the course of the day. In her gaze all of us were connected. There were a few extras—the cooks, the Thibaults, who had sad beagle eyes and their boy, Billy, who played alone and looked sort of dumb. They had a little house of their own. As did Margie and Carl, our couple. They were recent graduates of Colorado State, having both majored in speech pathology and Carl was going on to get an advanced degree. Dr. Carl, Margie would joke. He spoke only in the most softest tones about

the meaning of his work and his dedication to healing speech defects. He himself had one, had stuttered as a child. Margie had long black hair and dragged Carl's name out affectionately like she were some trashy wife, "Cah-rel!" she would cry (as if she enjoyed being debased by their love) and we, the interested teenagers and young college students were all in on their secret, they fucked. I suppose plenty of us did too and it was no secret at all but their youth and their beauty and their common goal . . . one night drunk Margie confessed that she and Carl were going to start a "center" together. We were in awe, the faces glowed around the campfire, and it only added a religious fervor to their fucking—here we were at an extremely straight all girls camp and they were inside of their cabin having all that, now and in the future. We were immersed in their sex when she said Cah-rel.

Great couples scare me. It's usually a skinny cute guy and a real Babe. I know I'm totally feasting on her with my eyes and somehow being him, the lucky skinny little dude who was funny. It's like religion or a deck of cards. The other one is the big man and the tiny woman. It seemed to be everywhere when I was a kid. It's not so popular anymore, which is great. I bet Carl really pounded it into Margie. That was their joke. But first she sucked his dick. So what would I do with Jilda Breed. At the end of the summer, or whenever the kids left we had to write up a report. I mean, it wasn't a big deal. Certainly not to normal people. You don't picture people down at the police station laboring over depositions. Insurance companies don't sweat bullets over accident descriptions. My grandmother died at Westborough State Hospital and for almost two years I've been engaged in extracting from the medical records department a copy of her story. A story? Could it be that?

Nellie Reirdan Myles, died 1957, Westborough State Hospital, born in County Cork. So reads: "She lay over the body of her sleeping son, John" (Eileen's godfather) and it was approximately 9:30 AM when any decent eldest Irish son would be sitting at his desk, winking at his secretary, feet comfy in his shiny Florsheim's, imagining how he would overhaul the part of Boston that lay down around him, 10 flights below—Scollay Square, a worthless part of town, and he John Myles would smash it to bits with its burlesque halls (The Old Howard—Busty Russell, Cupcakes Cassidy, Irma the Chest), tattoo parlors and two bit whores and kids skipping school, reshaping it into a feasible harborfront setting with tall apartment buildings and restaurants. All because of her. His beloved mother, Nellie, whose photograph was on his desk on Broad Street.

Instead, John stunk like Seagrams whiskey, hadn't a woman in his life or a pot to pee in and after all the years of taking guff from his father, Nellie just wanted to kill the slimy bastard, her son John, how she rued the day she had popped him out of her own pained guts. She grabbed



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the front of his three day-old shirt and yanked him up with the butcher knife in her right hand, placing it under his neck.

I mean, I would gladly settle for a clear description of how they lobotomized her, hydrotherapied, electroshocked Nellie. But it's probably just a death certificate and a scrawled doctor's note. "Patient is melancholic. Refuses to speak, eat."

Because I have spent my life between the walls of institutions, because I was unable at five to get beyond the tulips of the place and see where she lived, I continuously shoot my wad, make my own inappropriate nature vividly plain, endlessly expose the full dose of my abnormality when presented with any simple request to fill out a form that has longer than a one line blank. If there is no form, then I will really go to town and that is what I did with Jilda. I was not asked by Camp Marlin to do a portrait of her. I was not requested to psychoanalyze her. To adore her. To declaim my love, explore the intricacies of my obsession, to quietly explain that I had spent my life dreaming of girls who looked like boys, that I was one and had finally found my match, my sister, my little brother. You are taking her away. The summer is half over. I am 18. I came here because I weigh 133 pounds and live in Arlington with my mother and my father is dead and I drink too much. Nothing is ever right in my life. I have no desire. I only want clothes and to be somewhere else. I have been hidden so long, my life is over and yet it has hardly begun. I stood there in those yellowing walls of a department store where I was more at home than in the hulking corridors of the state university that did introduce me to a larger intellectual framework than I had ever imagined existed, yet I still hoped college would be a place where I would be transformed by the very walls of its institutional beauty, by its otherness, by its relationship to a purer existence than anything that I had ever known, a world of intelligence and sports cars, of nature and science, of bits and pieces of all the wisdom known to man in handsome leather binding, books and stone and freedom, the ivy league, other states, western ones, small mid-atlantic junior colleges, strange art schools in California, anything that unlike me, had managed to put its roots in a suitcase, a trunk and got on a train and went away. I was not like that and I had come here to Camp Marlin in my shame and with what tiny hope I still allowed myself, perhaps to find a way to assemble something that would do just as well. Art. To make something like it. A semblance. To rekindle my dream. That I could put on a pair of shoes, to have a small job and walk around in a new situation and improve myself a bit, and change.

Fat chance. I had lust. I had excitement and lust over a small child who was perhaps my sister's age who had a voice like a small harmonica, who had braces and you knew they would come off. Who had small feet. Who rode a horse, but no big deal. Who was a moderately talented artist. Who could see that I was great and admired me for it. Who could see that I was

wild. Who saw that in me in the midst of this boring job where I was unable to be a child again, because I had been born wrong, was not encouraged and now was wrong in the world, in the wrong place in it, 18, too late. No, Jilda loved me. I loved her. Shyly, we walked down the paths through the woods, and I would not have dreamed of touching her, she was more like my religion. But we would be beautiful, I knew that too. I liked her blue sneakers. I loved her little shirts. Even though she was a boy and I was her big sister I could see that she knew I was kind of male too. The sun shone on her hair, like butter-scotch and I was in love. This was all wrong. It was so slightly under the surface of every moment in the first half of that summer that I was quietly happy, brighter somehow, I didn't know where the light was coming from. And there were other girls too, it was an all girls camp, but Jilda was especially mine. She slept in my cabin, she breathed with me. Once I even drew her. I think she took the drawing too. And I would sit with the girls and do clay modelling because I wanted to do her head. I loved her head. I was hiding it. Even from myself. In a tiny bright way I knew. They asked me to write about Jilda Breed. She was leaving camp early. Sure, I said.

"Jilda Breed is so completely charming and intelligent, almost too great a young person to be believed. There is almost nothing wrong with Jilda and this draws people to her in an uncanny fashion and I would say because of how attractive she is to people and because it seems to come so easy to her to be likable and bask well in the affection of almost everyone who ever lays their eyes on her I would watch out. I think the one danger in Jilda's personality is that it is really too easy for her to keep pleasing people because that is what they want. I think it might be really hard for Jilda to not do this, to express a little bit of difference between herself and them and I think she should be encouraged to be a little bit ornery."

Her parents were amazed. Every parent of course wants to hear how their kid is the sun around which all kids and lives revolve. I confirmed this for them and even gave them something to watch out for which parents of perfect children need, a little job. I remember the father just standing there holding the paper and his mouth hanging open. "This is amazing. You've really given us something to think about." Now they had their arms around each other. I wonder if they know I'm a lesbian. It was the first time I ever thought that.

Then I went down to my cabin to cry. And I didn't stop eating for two months. I couldn't believe I was in love with a kid. I didn't know I could care so much. She was so perfect. She was the Peter Pan boy. The loss was maybe more gigantic than anything I had ever experienced. Something beautiful was gone and I was exposed. Naked in my feeling for someone else. A pretty little fourteen year old girl. At night I would unlock the deep freezer in the kitchen and dig a soup spoon into the peppermint ice cream. I would break open vats of peanut butter. I would get seven candy bars after dinner. There was a

hole in me I never allowed before. It was a game to see how much I could stuff in. And in this I became sort of a leader. The summer was half over and no one had anyone they loved and it took the edge off those disappointing nights in the knotty pine counselors' room. I remember reading *Fail-Safe*. Because I always meant to read it. Blaring red cover, black letters. "Raise your dixie cups, the South will rise again." I thought of my fellow counselors as a bunch of college catalogues. There was blonde Kaye from The University of Wisconsin who always wore a green sweatshirt telling us so. She wore glasses and was a writer. There was Julie from King of Prussia, Pa. who went to Temple and was a Jew. Leslie Rakestraw was from New Mexico and she had braces because she had been dating a dentist who convinced her she needed them and then he broke up with her. Her new boyfriend's father was the owner of the Southwestern Brewing company. He was rich. There was Sue Ellen from Provo, Utah. She had kinky hair, was slightly overweight, had a whole lot of little girl mannerisms and wasn't cute, but was so homely that she was, finally, cute and there was some kind of homo thing going on between us because we got closer and closer, I don't know, we just wanted to tell each other all about ourselves, really obsessive and then she backed off, maybe at about the same time I would have backed off from her and we really never spoke after that. I think she was crazy. I think she withdrew from everybody. Anyway I learned all about Mormons from her. The relativity of the word gentile was fascinating to me. There's a million stars in the sky. Everyone's other, somewhere. Theresa Jazinowsky, a Pole from Chicago. She was an intellectual. Had a boyfriend named Lenny. They smoked pot. She would do this swaying hippy dance to "I'll be your baby tonight." I think I had a crush on her too. Her father was a working class man. It was a relief to know that all working class people weren't like me or Joyce. Joyce never hung out. She popped her head into the room once in a while and embarrassed everyone because we all hated her. The point of all our bonding behavior in the knotty pine counselor's room was that, though we were camp counselors, we were not, in fact, nice people. We were there to be bad. Watching everyone make some transition to sweetness for the brief moment Joyce appeared was a kind of falsity I could not bear. She'd only be there for a minute. Had to sleep. She needed to get up early so she could play with my tits and then teach kids tennis. Wonder where she learned.

Something scary was happening to me. I would eat an extra meal and I would jump on the scale. A hundred and forty two. Oh shit. I had never weighed this much. Nonetheless I would bring a huge loaf of Wonder Bread up to the bad room and a cardboard tub of smooth Skippy peanut butter and insist that we all make sandwiches. I brought marshmallow too. It was like the only fucked up thing you could do. I could get almost anyone involved and was noticing even the swimming counselors soon had little rolls over their bikini bottoms and I knew I

was not alone. It was just like I had never experimented with this thing of eating as much as you could. I was just out to smash something as hard as possible. It was like a statue of me inside that I couldn't get out. I decided I would make it huge. Eventually everybody knew something was wrong—I guess we had made it through half the summer and all of us would be going home in a few weeks and I started to get this concerned treatment from everyone that suggested I was maybe going a little bit insane, so I began to socialize, even moderate my eating. Claudette had begun to make comments at dinner about Maw. (She had dragged her mother into the camp racket with her, there was a lady we were all encouraged to call "Maw" and she did the book-keeping and the buying for the kitchen.) Unlike Claudette, Maw was a tough femme. She wore cardigans over her shoulders, wore a charm bracelet and would have looked normal with a gun in her hand) had decided we should lock the kitchen at night because some counselors were clearly abusing the snacking privileges and green fingerprints were found on the tub of an illicitly opened 10-gallon vat of peppermint ice cream. I had been doing a late night mural for the end of the summer show, The Wizard of Oz, with a particularly big wavering Emerald City and astonished animals striking poses around its gates. Yeah, so (fuck you) it was my fingerprints. The food got locked. It was everything short of being forced to walk the campgrounds with a wooden sign stating "PIG" around my neck. So I decided to socialize my eating, to diet as had been my plan. I felt like I was lying at the bottom of a well watching the world fall away. If, before, I only had my excess, now I only had my plan. And I knew this plan. It felt tragic. People calmed down around me once they knew I wouldn't incite them to gluttony any more and I guess I started learning how to swim and people were polite to me as I slogged through my six little laps from one dock to another but now I was just kind of holding my breath and I knew something was wrong. You know what it's like to eat seven candy bars, one after another. Well, I no longer had to do that.

One day we went to a Country Fair. It was in Peterborough. We were running a stand with information about Camp Marlin and we had to wear our uniforms which I had finally managed to get into, clipping the little green button closed around my waist. I had been gleefully hopping onto the scales morning after morning, stealthily in the afternoon, late at night. I knew only the morning counted, but now I was living for the sight of those numbers going down, 137, 136 and, Lo! I had arrived at the line of 132, actually skinnier than when I arrived. Who was I now, someone else? Now I would go to an empty stone building at the back of the camp that had a record player and I would make bouillon on the hot plate and Theresa would smoke her Lucky Strikes. And Bob Dylan would croon, "Shut the lights, pull the shade, you don't have to be afraid. I'll be your baby, tonight."

D. FLAX

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We wore these green shorts and white shirts and I don't know if there was anything else. I remember leaning on my counter in a state of . . . I don't know, if absence felt like bliss, then it could be that. A CIT (counselor-in-training) named Cissy came up and she had a cupcake in one hand and a puppet on her other which she had obviously bought from one of the craft booths. I'm sure it cost 20 bucks. These kids definitely had bigger incomes than most of us. Cissy had braces. "H-woh Eileen," said the girl making a voice for a rabbit with a moustache. "You d'won't look very happy." The puppet hands started to grab my nose. I swatted her. Peter Whitman walked by. He was holding hands with a black haired woman with a ponytail. This was his life. What was he doing here. He had a cigarette in one hand and a woman in the other. He had a dark-blue grey shirt on with tiny black things. He had on his big boots. He wore chinos. Did he see me? I turned around. Did he see me. I looked at myself. Green jamaicas. My belly was protruding a little. I wanted a cigarette. No, I will not smoke. I was trying to purify my youth. I wanted to be a perfect sacrament. I was trying to relax. I was trying to not die right away. I was trying to not start clenching my fists. Cissy get me a donut. Get me six. I was trying to stay awake. I was trying to be human. Get me a coke too. I was trying not to cry. I was trying not to vanish. I was trying to remember who I was. I was trying not to fall down on the ground. Get me a coke. I want to go. I want to go. Is the summer almost over. In two weeks I shot up to 152 pounds. The fattest I had ever been in my life. It was like I was nobody. It was like my face was so big. I felt like a big clown. The night of the summer show I agreed to put a big gorilla costume on and I stepped out on the stage and all the kids cheered. I was supposed to frolic and be funny but I just stood there. I wanted to go home. I wanted to hide. I wanted to die. I wanted to not be. I remembered that. A chilly white sound and a picture chilly white from once when I had a fever and bear machines coming toward me whirling and whirling and the insane repetitions of their demands. Do it again Eileen. Do it again. The rhythm of it like a dentist's drill. Not the words, but the syllables. The sound. At the bottom, I was not emptiness, or death. But that. Some horrifying white thing. Again and again. The bear's demand. A whole tribe of them. Or were they gophers. Coming close. Everything white. Their demand.

So Jilda Breed was nothing. She was just me. And she was gone. ■

"Camp" is from Cool for You, a non-fiction novel in progress. Eileen Myles's most recent volume of poems, School of Fish (BLACK SPARROW) was published in May. She reads and performs her work across the country and will appear in Provincetown in July with the Sister Spit road tour.

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Billy

Billy was in the kitchen washing glasses. I'd watched him all day trying to eat his beautiful party food, the onion pizzas his lover had made, the frittata I'd brought to the brunch. It wasn't that he didn't want to eat, he simply couldn't; he had an ulcer in his esophagus, the nerves exposed and so painful even tepid water at the wrong moment could feel like the end of the world. Tentatively, he'd nibble a piece of fruit, swallowing deliberately, seeing if it would pass, but each time he tried his face clamped shut, his upper lip shining with perspiration.

Months ago Billy had come to me for a massage. "I'm incredibly stiff," he said, "I'm having a hard time moving my neck." I left the room and he took off his clothes, stripping down to a pair of tight Calvin Klein boxers which were the color of the sky that day, early spring, an inextricable gray through the window in the room where I work. It was warm inside so he lay on top of the blankets with his hands folded neatly on his smooth belly. I asked him to uncross his ankles. I put my hands on his head. "I want to, but lately I haven't been able to cry," he said. His head began to move slightly, left to right. I kept my hands where they were and followed, back and forth, regular as the pendulum of a clock. Then his head began to move in full circles, small at first but growing, bending backward from the hinge in the neck, drawing my fingers more and more deeply up beneath the occipital ridge. His eyes were tightly shut but every now and then he flung them open like a drape so I could see just how scared he was, and at the same time his clenched jaw worked itself free and he began chewing at the air, some frantic chestnut horse with all that wavy hair. I kept holding on to his head while it turned, his neck unwinding like the cord we all know it is, turning dramatically once more to the right and then stopping there, frozen, cheek to shoulder, as if it did not want to go on. "Take a breath," I said, and he began to roll, left shoulder following his head over to the right, knees pumping up and down like a child's on a bike, me bracing his body with my own so he wouldn't fall off the table, and then he began to moan from the throat, then the belly, saying "oh, oh," over and over again

as if he were seeing something there, my hands still on his head as he turned, left shoulder heaving now, his arms outstretched, hands clenching and unclenching the air, something real I could not see prompting me to tell him, "You can let go of what you're holding on to," so he opened his hands, and with my hands still on his head he began to cry.

Now I went into the kitchen and picked up a towel. He usually didn't let anyone help, choosing instead to shoo his guests like chickens back out into the yard, but this time he offered me a glass to wipe. He swallowed and I watched his face shut tight against something I could not imagine, the pain he felt.

"I should make another appointment," he said.

Anonymous

She came to me on foot in the snow. I watched her descend the hill in front of my house stylishly (that is to say she did not slip though the morning was icy and our street was unplowed), back straight, long neck held aloft like a spar against the winter sky. She wore a darkly printed scarf draped over her head, allowing a thick mass of curly red hair to reveal itself like serpents in the bowers.

I held the door open for her, letting some of the heat escape. "Did you have any trouble finding me?" I asked.

"I have an exquisite sense of direction," she said.

I brought her upstairs to my room, turning down the blankets on the table as she began to separate herself unselfconsciously from her clothes: a jacket, a vest, some heavy, woolen pants, the large scarf shed to reveal a wide headband pulled low to cover the line of her hair. She was a thin woman, and undressed her long curls took on the appearance of another article of clothing, the way women of old used to wear their hair: usefully, adornment in the function of protection.

She lay herself discreetly on the table, leaving the headband, which was royal blue, in place. She preferred the work I do insistent and deep; because of this I relied more on my bones that

*Please
don't touch me
there*

day, elbows and knuckles as opposed to the heavy musculature of my hands, though I began the session as I always do, by rubbing my palms briskly together and laying them gently on the top of her head. A calming gesture, a study of the map of tiny pulses which mark the spirit's travail. A lock of her hair had fallen into her face, and I lifted it to set it aside. It had the texture of dried jewelweed. I moved my hands to her shoulders and began to press downward. Those small balls fit completely in my palms, and though I did not look I thought about her hair, how it smelled like a doll's, the smell recalling the doll on which as a girl I had begun my life of patting, pretending it was the child I longed for but somehow knew I would never have.

It was winter but a wasp that had been living in the sill of the clerestory window came to light on the woman's head.

"Please don't touch me there," she said. ■

Melanie Braverman is the author of East Justice (PERMANENT PRESS). The work that appears here is an excerpt from a novel in progress called Love.

Life Is Unfair

We stopped posing when the cooking timer rang. Natasha squatted on the edge of the platform and changed her Tampax. How lib-erated can you get! I thought. One student peeked out from behind his drawing and smirked. But the other students pretended not to notice. They were so cool. Not just in attitude. Everyone in the classroom had on a sweater and a turtleneck. A few wore berets and one even had on gloves. I wore a robe during the break. But Natasha walked around the room nude, broken out in goose flesh with her Tampax string sticking out, sipping from a pint bottle of Wild Irish Rose and making unsolicited comments about the drawings. Every so often she had a coughing fit, a loud tuberculous rumble that brought tears to her eyes and turned her face red. She flung open the window and spit out a huge glob of phlegm at a passerby. Then she casually lit a Lucky Strike and took a slug of wine as if to soothe her throat.

The room was kept cool because of the so-called energy shortage. President Jimmy Carter ordered the heat turned down in the White House and donned a big bulky sweater for photo-ops. Annoyed motorists had to wait in line for hours to buy gas. But every concerned citizen realized the importance of energy conservation. Not Natasha. She didn't own a car and heated her house with a wood stove. She refused to believe that there ever was a fuel shortage. "Energy can neither be created nor destroyed," she said. "Hon, energy comes from the sun, but all these assholes are acting like it fell out of the sky. Anyway, they could at least have a heater," she said, tossing her head, "for the art models."

For our next pose, Natasha stood and I sat on a short stool near her rear end. She promptly cut a fart in my face. This time the class blew their cool and burst out laughing. I guess as a sort of apology Natasha invited me to the lavatory: "for a little treat, hon," on our next break. The timer rang, Natasha picked up her leopard print pocketbook and stepped into her leopard print pumps. But she didn't put on any clothing.

Rita Green, a sculpture teacher, in a tailored gray suit with huge shoulder-pads, gave us a cold stare when we passed her in the hall. "What the fuck is she looking at," Natasha said, thrusting open the lavatory door. "Who does she think she is? Going around in Joan Crawford drag. Look who's calling the kettle black." Natasha laughed so hard it brought on another coughing fit and her eyes watered, streaking her black eye make-up down to her chin. She looked like she was in pain. I felt stupid because I didn't know

what I could do to help, so I looked around pretending interest in the lavatory decor. Natasha recovered finally and groomed herself. She touched up her eye make-up by smearing black eye shadow over her lids up to her forehead and out to her hair line. She had no eyebrows and wore her blue-black hair in a short, straight bob. She outlined her lips with a tiny brush and filled them in with purple lipstick. Then she took the mirror off the wall and put some shiny pink powder on it. "Peruvian Pink," she said with a giggle. "Ever since that great pink shit hit town everybody says they got it. I think they just put red food coloring in it," she said, flicking her pen knife open to cut coke into lines. "I bet you never had anyone fart in your face before," she said, slicing a straw in half. "I'm sorry," Natasha said, sincerely. "But it's not like farting during a rim job," she explained. "Now that's gotta be the height of rudeness."

"Oh, so you're an expert on rimming etiquette," I said.

"Oh shut up," Natasha said, handing me the straw. I snorted the coke and Natasha licked the mirror.

We had one more pose to do before lunch. Most of the time passed pleasantly. Sunlight filled the room and it was a little warmer. An Ella Fitzgerald record played and Natasha hummed along to "Taking the A Train." Professor Hotchkiss stood behind a student with his arm over her shoulder. Her name was Lisa, a tall pretty blonde in a black turtleneck and jeans. He looked at us, held Lisa's charcoal up to his face, and squinted one eye. "Did they move?" He wondered out loud and his hand shook.

"I think the professor needs to get to the bar for his noon drink," Natasha whispered, but the students near us heard her. "I'm a pro. I don't move. I never get the shakes. I always have my wine with me," Natasha said out loud. The students laughed. Professor Hotchkiss didn't say anything but he was obviously pissed off. He walked right over to the record player, rejected Ella Fitzgerald, and slipped on Bob Dylan. That did it. Natasha lost her professionalism. "I'm not going to stand on one leg in a freezing room, nude, and listen to that pretentious bastard who can't carry a note across the street, try to sing." The students took a deep breath, hurt that anyone could say such mean things about their hero.

"But listen to what he's saying. Dig the words," Lisa said.

"The words! Words don't mean nothing in music! Besides, his words are a bunch of bullshit," Natasha screamed.

Professor Hotchkiss smiled. "Let's break for lunch," he said.

Instead of eating, Natasha and I went back to the lavatory. We worried about getting fat.

After lunch, we started with three minute poses to warm the students up. Professor Hotchkiss had apparently taken Natasha's advice; he had a quart of gin on his desk. He timed us with a stopwatch. Every three minutes he said, "change" and took a swig of his gin. The students working very hard at their art, didn't seem to notice he was getting drunk.

"Natasha did that pose before," Lisa complained, frowning. "Just two poses ago," she said, looking over at the professor.

"Yes, I believe you're right," Professor Hotchkiss said, staggering toward the model's platform.

I was standing with my arms stretched high above my head, in what I thought was a dramatic gesture. Natasha did one of her favorites—squatting with her hands in front of her knees like a catcher for the Yankees.

Professor Hotchkiss put his hands on Natasha's knees. "Just lie back." And Natasha did. Hotchkiss pushed her knees apart and leaned over her. He was weaving and I thought he might pass out.

Some of the students packed their things and left. "He's drunk. Let's go smoke some pot," I heard one say.

Lisa was really annoyed now. "I can't see either model, professor," she whined.

Professor Hotchkiss bent over at the waist, supported himself with an arm on either side of Natasha. She smiled at him and drew her legs up under his chest and pushed. He flew across the room and into Lisa's easel.

"Let's go," Natasha said, with a sigh.

"Hey, class is not over till three," Lisa said. She looked around. All the other students were gone. "My parents spent a lot of money to send me here to study art."

"Life is unfair," Natasha said.

"They had to give up everything! What is this? The models leave early and I think the professor has been drinking," Lisa began to sob.

Natasha and I got dressed and went back to the lavatory. She wore a black minidress with a leopard skin belt and matching turban. She had one leg up on the sink, her panty hose were torn at the crotch and her Tampax string stuck out.

"How did you get the strength to kick Hotchkiss like that? I mean, he's a big guy," I asked.

"I just focused all my hatred of Bob Dylan on him. It gives me so much energy and shit. John Lennon works too. When I think about how much I hate him, I get so much energy I could fucking levitate."

"Well, lucky for Hotchkiss he didn't play a Beatles' album. You might have kicked him out to Bolton Hill," I said. Natasha laughed and coughed.

"I know Bob Dylan can't sing, but he does have a worthwhile political message," I said, and wished I hadn't.

Because Natasha had another fit. She laughed, cried, and coughed.

"I don't give a shit about his politics. Ella Fitzgerald sings a silly nursery rhyme or just scats and shit. Sings about her man, she's broke, drunk."

We heard sobs coming from one of the stalls. Natasha seemed to panic and tried to wipe the spit stains off the mirror. Her eye got big and she shuddered. For a second I thought she was really scared. Then she laughed. The big faker. Or else maybe she applied her hatred of Dylan and Lennon to the threat.

It was Lisa. Her eyes were red and almost swollen shut. "Oh hon, whatsa matter?" Natasha asked, and poured out some more coke.

"This was the worst day of class and it's all your fault," Lisa said, and her lower lip quivered. "Professor Hotchkiss is passed out. Everybody is gone and the models are in here taking hard drugs and saying bad things about Bob Dylan. My parents are going to be so upset. My high school art teacher talked them into sending me here because she thought I had talent. Oh, never mind," she said, rubbing her eyes. "Someday your karma will come back to you."

"Oh come on, hon, don't be so uptight," Natasha said, and put her arm on her shoulder. "Here do some of this," she said, pointing toward the mirror. "It will make you feel better."

How could Natasha be so dumb to offer Lisa coke? She was so pissed I thought she would call the cops on us. But to my amazement she said, "Do you really think so?" with a snuffle.

We heard a throat clearing noise coming from one of the stalls. I walked back and checked under the doors for feet and didn't see any. Then Rita Green appeared. She must have been standing on the toilet seat!

"Natasha, do you think you could have her vanish?" Lisa asked, with a laugh. Well, I thought, Natasha's influence is powerful but this is ridiculous. She even laughed like Natasha and then coughed.

"Let's just get out of here," Natasha said. You two wanna have dinner at my place?"

"Sure," I said.

"My parents are . . . I'll have to ask . . . uh . . . tell my parents. Oh, Natasha I'd be delighted to have dinner with you," Lisa gushed.

We walked out to the bus stop. Now it was raining. Frozen rain. Natasha tightened the belt on her black vinyl coat and coughed and spit over her shoulder. Lisa pulled up the collar of her brown leather coat and coughed with her covering her mouth. She wore hand gloves. Christ, now they're going to have a coughing contest.

We got off the number 10 near Patterson Park. In the vacant lot next to Natasha's little redbrick house we picked up some newspapers, pieces of broken furniture and some stuffing from an



MARY VIVIAN PEARCE IN JOHN WATERS' *MONDO TRASHO*, 1969

old sofa. It was for the wood stove, Natasha told Lisa.

At Natasha's house Lisa asked if she could use her telephone.

"A telephone! How bourgeois!" Natasha shrieked. She ripped a rotten chair leg off its seat for the fire.

I poured myself a glass of red wine and flopped on the couch.

"I should call my parents and tell them I won't be home for dinner," Lisa said, she shook her head and raised her eyebrows.

"There's a pay phone on the corner, hon," Natasha said. She scraped a kitchen match on the side of the stove.

"Oh, I think I'll skip it. They'll know I'm not coming home when I don't show up," Lisa said, then flipped her hair over her shoulder and sputtered a timid little cough.

Natasha coughed and spat a blob of phlegm into the sink. She took a couple of fish out of the fridge and flipped them into the frying pan. Her two black and orange cats trotted over and rubbed her legs.

I began to feel like I was in a T.B. ward.

After dinner, we had strong French roast coffee and Lisa and Natasha plowed into a heated art debate. Pre-this and post-that and time and space. They argued about art and coughed. The kind of talk Natasha usually called "artsy fartsy shit." I never knew she knew so much about art history. I tried to shift the conversation to politics because I remembered Natasha had told Lisa that "like is unfair," and I thought she was making fun of President Carter. He had said "life is unfair" about an amendment that would take away public funds for abortion.

"That's outright discrimination against the poor," I said. But Natasha just nodded.

Around midnight I went home. Lisa and Natasha were still talking about art and coughing.

They were a little late for class the next day. Lisa was wearing the same clothes. And Natasha had bags under her eyes. They were both hungover.

Professor Hotchkiss had the shakes badly; he had to hold his wrist to read his watch. "As soon as the models are ready, we'll start warming up with short poses."

We got undressed. I stood up with one foot on the stool and my arm stretched out like I was hailing a cab. Natasha did her Yogi Berra thing. Lisa and the other students burst out laughing. Professor Hotchkiss took a deep breath, turned his back to the class and said, "Change."

"Professor, that pose was only a second," Lisa said. "I'm trying to get an education here. Wait until evaluation time comes around."

"Change, models, please change the pose," Professor Hotchkiss said, still facing the door.

Rita Green walked in. She whispered something to Hotchkiss and left.

"Natasha, you're wanted at Mrs. Surit's office," Hotchkiss said, facing the class.

"What?" Lisa said, "I'm going with her."

Natasha walked over to her and took her hand, "Let's go."

They both coughed.

"Natasha, put your clothes on," Hotchkiss said.

Lisa came back about 10 poses later. Professor Hotchkiss smiled. "Glad to see you back in class. However, I'll have to mark you down for absenteeism."

"You disgusting motherfucker, you snitched Natasha off and everything that happened yesterday was all your dumb drunken asshole fault," Lisa said, putting her hands on her hips and leaning forward. "Natasha's been suspended for two weeks." Lisa went back to her drawing board. "Mrs. Surit said it's because Natasha walks around the halls nude. But that's bullshit."

The class stopped drawing.

"Now she talks like Natasha," a student said.

"When you have no personality of your own, you steal one," I said.

Hotchkiss walked over to Lisa. "I didn't have anything to do with it. Rita Green complained about Natasha walking around nude." He tried to put his arm around her, but she elbowed him in the ribs.

"Can't we please just go back to work?" Lisa said.

"Change," Hotchkiss said.

Natasha came back to work a couple of weeks later. I modeled with her in a painting class.

When she had her period, she changed her Tampax in the lavatory. What's more, she concealed the string. ■

Mary Vivian Pearce is completing an MFA in fiction at Johns Hopkins. She is one of the original John Waters's Dreamlanders and her profile appears in the cover story.

The Men from the Boys

"Going tricking?" Javitz asked, earlier tonight, in that voice that knew the answers to its own questions.

I just laughed.

Tricking. Such an odd little twist of a word. As if I would take one of these boys home with me, and rather than sex, I'd pull a rabbit out of a hat. As if we'd get to my door and I'd refuse to let him inside, turning instead with a maniacal grin to say, "Tricked ya!"

As if tricks were the antithesis of treats, and not what they are: the caramel on the apple, the cinnamon in the bun, the cotton candy on the stick. Tricks are how we treat ourselves. Not that all tricks are always so delectable: some of mine have been the proverbial rocks in Charlie Brown's paper bag. But most of them have been sweet: Hershey's Kisses. Milky Ways. Almond Boys.

That night, it was his nipples that first bewitched me from across the room, little pink cones in relief against sweat-dappled copper skin. The boy I was watching moved in a rhythm that repudiated the beat on the dance floor. He wore a vest but no shirt, a grin but no smile.

Summer is a time of random magic such as this, of surprising spirits conjured up between the sheets of my bed in a room overlooking Provincetown harbor. Here, strangers' kisses expose souls to me. The uneven scar on one boy's abdomen, the crinkles at the corners of another's eyes reveal more truths than I could ever discover in a more consistent lover.

It was the last summer in which I was to be young.

"Hi," the boy said to me, stroking his firm stomach idly. Little beads of sweat left shimmering trails down the smooth brown flat plain. He couldn't be more than 23.

"I've seen you around," he said. "You work up here?"

"No," I told him, which was a lie. Mystery helps in this town—especially when you're no longer 23. "But *you* do," I said. "A houseboy or a waiter?" I knew the options for boys his age.

He was a houseboy. And so, the script stayed on course—except for the brief flutter of my eyelids at that precise moment, when I found the eyes of a man across the dance floor. My breath caught, and I worried that the houseboy noticed. But he didn't—of course not: he was deep into character. Acknowledging my distraction would have been akin to an actor on stage responding to the laughter of the audience in the middle of a scene. He carried on, as was proper. But I stumbled, drawn by a man across the room, a

man I didn't know, a man I thought was someone else.

"What's your name?" the boy was asking.

I turned to face him. "Jeff. And yours?"

"Eduardo."

We shook hands. Our eyes held.

And so, another one.

That was the start of it, far back at the beginning of the summer, in the warm eager days of late May.

On that night, the summer as yet unfolded, the calendar still unmarked, I'd asked Javitz, "Can I still get away with it?"

He laughed. "Maybe for another year."

My houseboy turned out to be 22, as beautiful as any boy who ever sweat on a dance floor in Provincetown. Javitz merely clucked the first time he met him. "When are you going to sleep with a *man*?"

"I should probably try," I admitted. "All these kids want is love and marriage."

"This one too?" Javitz asked. "Already?"

I nodded.

They've got it easy," Javitz says, exhaling cigarette smoke. "All they're looking for are boyfriends."

Once, Javitz and I had been boyfriends—when I was Eduardo's age and Javitz was mine. Now I'm the mentor, my tricks the mentees. "These kids all think they're so far advanced," I lamented to Javitz. "Oh, I've been out since I was 14," or "I brought my boyfriend to my junior prom." But they don't know *anything* about being gay."

"You were like him once."

"No, I wasn't. I knew all of you guys." I laughed. "Who does *he* have to teach him how to be gay?"

"You?" I couldn't tell if he was being sarcastic or not. "Here's a test," Javitz said. "Go in and ask him to explain the difference between Blanche Hudson and Blanche DuBois."

"But that's just it," I laughed. "I can't expect him to know. Those old movies were yours to share with me. They aren't mine."

Still, I tried. I tried to do for Eduardo what Javitz had done for me. But I was unprepared for the task. Eduardo wasn't supposed to last; tricks are meant to be fleeting. How did he manage to cross the barrier, the carefully constructed boundary I'd erected? He wasn't too pleased when he found out about Lloyd. "I don't sleep with married men," he'd scolded, when I finally told him I had a boyfriend.

"Well," I quipped, a cocky shit I'm embarrassed to remember, "you just did."

Why he kept coming around when I started off as such an asshole I don't know. But he did. The sex was good; no, it was more than good. It was far hotter than anything Lloyd and I still managed to do after six years. But something more than sex was happening. I kept expecting the passion to burn itself out, as each of my summer romances had for the past four summers. But Eduardo was different. And so was I.

For those of us who arrive in May, sweating on the dance floor becomes very tired by August. One particularly blistering day, Eduardo and I decided to rent a movie, cook dinner, and stay in. He'd never seen *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* No better excuse for a lesson in Gay Camp Classics 101.

"Every gay man *must* see this movie," I told him. "You're not officially queer until you've seen it."

"Just don't do your Bette Davis imitation," he insisted.

I popped my eyes and clipped my words. "Whatevah you say, Ed-wah-do."

"Oh, God . . ."

But when we got to the video store, *Baby Jane* had already been checked out. "Can we get *When Harry Met Sally* instead?" Eduardo asked.

"No," I barked. "I'm tired of all that heterosexual pabulum Hollywood forces down my throat. You know, it didn't used to be this way. When Marlene Dietrich made love to Cary Grant, it wasn't hetero—it was *universal*. It was—*transcendent*. But Billy Crystal and what's-her-name"—I looked over at Eduardo. He was grinning. "You just said that to get me going, didn't you?"

He knew how to do that. I kissed him hard right there in the video store.

So we rented *Rebecca* instead. "Oh, you'll love this movie," I promised, but Eduardo wasn't so sure.

"Old movies aren't very realistic," he told me.

"Yeah, so?" I asked him. "Why is it that such a premium is placed on reality these days? Why do we judge a film based on how *real* it seems? How about how emotional it is? How compelling? How *beautiful*?"

"I don't feel those things unless I can feel something's real."

"That's the problem with you younger gay men these days. Everything's got to be palpable."

"I don't know that word. Did you use it just to make me feel ignorant?"

"No. It means obvious. Easy to grasp. Touchable. *Real*."

"Yeah. My kind of movie."

I sighed. "Maybe we *should've* rented *When Harry Met Sally*."

We made linguine with a tomato-basil sauce and uncorked a bottle of wine. Once, a decade ago, I sat in front of the television with Javitz this way, except I think it was lasagna and *Written on the Wind*. Eduardo wrapped a blanket around both our shoulders and we watched the film in a silver glow. The dreamy, haunting opening: "Last night I dreamed I went to Manderly again," and the long sweeping shot up the road to the charred ruins of the great old house.

Of course Eduardo clucked over the obviously fake cliff from which Olivier was about to jump. And he said it was completely unrealistic that a man of his station would pursue a simple paid companion like Joan Fontaine. But at the moment it seems as if they'll never see each other again, just as Joan's nasty employer prepares to whisk her away without being able to say goodbye, we were both caught up in the magic. I looked over at Eduardo: his eyes shone with moisture. Of course, they *do* find each other, and Olivier proposes marriage, and all is right with the fairy tale.

Except—and I seized the remote and rewound the tape.

"What are you doing?" Eduardo asked.

Olivier and Fontaine moved backward in grainy, jerky movements. Then I hit play.

"I was crying all morning thinking I'd never see you again," Fontaine said, all doe-eyed and dewy.

"Bless you for that," Olivier said, touching her cheek. "I'll remind you of that someday." His adoring eyes never leave her face. "You won't believe me. Pity you have to grow up."

Turns out, Eduardo adored the movie. His hands gripped mine during the climactic fire scene as Judith Anderson loomed large among the flames. I've seen it a dozen times. I preferred watching Eduardo, his eyes big and wondrous, and I marveled at how truly beautiful he was.

When the movie was over, he turned to me and said, "Thank you." I assumed now we'd make love. We did—but we didn't have sex. We fell asleep in each other's arms right there on the floor, while the video rewound above us. When Javitz came home, he turned off the TV and stepped over us to go to bed. ■

William J. Mann is the recipient of a fellowship in fiction from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and author of the novel The Men from the Boys, from which this excerpt is selected and reprinted by arrangement with DUTTON SIGNET, a division of PENGUIN BOOKS USA, INC.

ENS GRAPHICS PAYS HOMAGE TO A POET

From time to time someone still must

dig up a rusted argument
from underneath a bush
and haul it off to the dump.

Those who knew
what this was all about
must make way for those
who know little.

And less than that.

And at last nothing less than
nothing.

"The End and the Beginning"
1993

1996

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JONATHAN BLUM and his work will not be in Provincetown this summer.

If any of his paintings appear on the local art market, they should be considered "fakes" and should be brought to the attention of local authorities.

For any other business concerning Mr. Blum, please contact him directly in Washington D.C. at (202) 543-0306.

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PHOTO PAUL CHURCH



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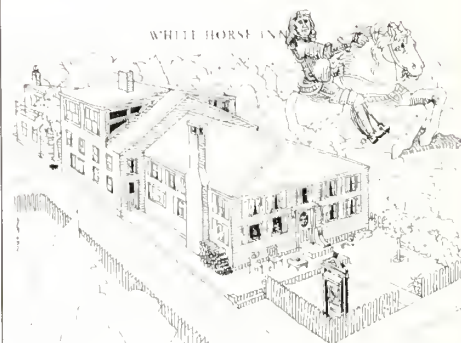


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Air, Light, Color

Provincetown Art Association and Museum

BY CHRISTOPHER BUSA

Visiting Resika's hilltop studio in 1991, I saw, in a cone of north light streaming from a skylight onto his working wall, one of his pier paintings in progress, a somber hulk hanging weightlessly in the center of the canvas, hardly supported by a shaky wharf on wobbly stilts. The edges of the canvas were unfinished; the dark shape, like a shadow of itself, seemed to float in unbound space. Resika was working on the reflection of yellow sun on the trapezoidal plane of one side of the building. The light hit the building like a bronze gong, and the echo of its color splashed in the water. With a bemused respect for his own brilliance, the artist said, "That's the part that will make you say to the picture, that

19th century. When Resika was 12 years old he began taking art classes from Sol Wilson in a similar artists' space on West 16th Street. "So my little models are not so unlike Sol's," Resika recently recalled. "He used to have rocks and lighthouses, sand and little boats."

Resika had his first one-person show in New York at age 19. The paintings were demonstrations of his two-year study with Hans Hofmann—"pure Hofmann," he says, dismissing his few early abstractions that, stored with his father, survived a later studio fire and prove that he was actually stepping away from Hofmann. After this early success, Resika did not show again until his late 30s. Instead he travelled in Europe for much of the decade. He settled for two years in Venice, absorbing Venetian painting in its own water-refracted atmosphere. He discovered Titian, whose colors flow so fully with his form that they reminded Resika of Hofmann. Resika remembered how Hofmann spoke only of the old masters, even though he also spoke of the need for today's artist to work in the language of his time, which at mid-century was abstraction. The goal of abstraction is purification through choice. One "selects from" when one abstracts. The dross drops away, the essence becomes clear. Even Jan Muller, a Hofmann student who later used the figure so tellingly, was shocked when Resika, with the natural defiance of an independent, turned so early and decisively, while in Venice, to the figure.

When Resika returned to the U.S., pop art, minimalism, and conceptualism were freshly triumphant over abstract expressionism. He was driving in Westchester with the artist Friedel Dzubas, his escort to the small college where Resika would be teaching his first class. "As we drove," Resika said, "he was telling me about this terrible new movement, just getting started. Pop art! I remember the conversation very vividly because of his fury." Dzubas was angry because pop art, and its intellectual clone, conceptual art, equate the trivial with the significant. All was culture, the anthropologists told everybody collectively; but the artists said, individually: "I am culture!" They wanted some discrimination based on the act of making, measured against the highest standards of the past, which, by dint of arduous research, they were experts on. The pop artist felt that was phooey. "Serious" painters, like Dzubas and Resika, so-called because they excluded commercial ideas from their art, were full of woe in 1960 when art began to be defined as broader than painting. Marketeering became a genre sanctioned by Andy Warhol, who began his career designing windows on Fifth Avenue, bringing the boutique into the current age of installation.

reflection is terrific. So now I've got to make the whole picture wonderful like that."

A Rorschach blot is evidence that even an ugly shape can look appealing when it is balanced by its flopped image. Resika plays with this idea in his reflections, doublings so animated with motion that his concept of beauty must include the experience of being in the world. The paintings possess a swaying counter-rhythm with sudden directional impulses, like smoke that twists and turns through loops of air currents.

Curated by Steven Harvey and Lawrence Salander, Resika's dealers at Salander-O'Reilly Gallery in New York, the exhibition in Provincetown pays sophisticated homage to the Cape as inspiration for the artist's best paintings. Most are very recent, casually suggesting that the artist, in his late '60s, is thriving at peak power. Of genuine surprise, the selection reveals the celebrated colorist to be a secret architect of structure.

It is said about Tintoretto that the Venetian had smoke, mirrors, and small wax models arranged on a stage in his studio, and a moveable light so the same shapes could be seen from different angles. Resika, too, works from toy models of boats and piers in a box of sand, permanently set up in his studio on West 80th Street, in a building that has housed artists since the

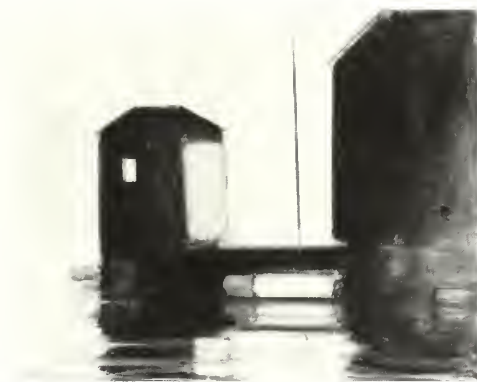


In the mid-'60s Resika moved to Wellfleet, believing he had discovered Arcadia. He remembered the pilgrimage of Corot who travelled about France, and especially Italy, making sketches from nature, and from these composing paintings in his studio. If studio paintings are associated with the urban, Corot brought the authenticity of the country into the artifice of the cosmopolitan studio, without pandering to romantic escapism. Resika respected that. He admired the fertility of Corot's 10,000 greens, and his mastery of this color that can kill landscape painting. Simultaneously he heard the siren-song of Blair Phillips, a native of Wellfleet, and the mermaid he would draw from life on Horseleech Pond. When they married, he received her landscape as a dowry, and began painting the billowing tree on the pond's edge, still a constant subject.

A crucial event for Resika, and for the community that has embraced his devotion to painting in the old-fashioned modernist sense, was the formation of Long Point Gallery in 1977. Resika is proud that he is the last of the 13 originals to join. (When the artists of Long Point Gallery were featured on the cover of *Provincetown Arts* in 1992, Resika was identified as the exception who typifies this group of eccentrics.) The floors, haphazardly stained with turpentine and paint from summer art classes, were ample enough to be converted into an indoor tennis court, but the artists chose to create great rooms for paintings. "Painting demands good rooms!" Resika thundered at private meetings, where champagne was iced in aluminum paint buckets, and the members nibbled bluefish smoked by Ed Giobbi.

At this time, everything came together for Resika. He began to link abstraction with geometrical ordering, and geometry with gesture, color, simplification, emphasis, boldness, and pungency. He began to excrete, against his will, a casual brilliance. He showed beside other abstractionists at Long Point, Fritz Bultman, Judith Rothschild, Robert Motherwell. He and Motherwell enjoyed each other. Their dialogue was pointed and respectful. The ideological battle of the '40s and '50s was concluded. "I used to accuse Motherwell of being ideological, but so was I," he admits belatedly. "I had as much trouble seeing his work as he mine. I only say this because he once made a remark to me—'Isn't it wonderful how we all get along without ideology?' I was shook up. I shouldn't have been. It was a very intelligent remark. Those of us who were supposed to be the reigning ideology were just as ideological. We tried not to be, but we were."

Resika moved from Wellfleet, closer to Provincetown. From his cliff-side residence in North Truro, he looked across Provincetown harbor to the Pilgrim Monument: tall, unwavering, thin in the distance like the thick mast of a huge boat, the granite needle is in fact an uncanny imitation of a typical bell tower in medieval Italy. In one picture from the early '70s, "Toward Provincetown," you can see the Monument in the distance, beckoning in a green landscape.



PAUL RESIKA, ORANGE BOAT - BLACK PIER, 1997

Slowly, Resika inched toward Provincetown, a displaced Venice more palpable than the memory of the real one. But before the pier paintings came a series of Zen-like responses to beach figures, illuminated at night by bonfire, the first batch done quickly in dye colors and produced in "two very good days" in 1990. The animation of the flame, flickering briefly, gives a "glimpse," as de Kooning said—an intimate revelation of timelessness converted to actual time in the act of a brush stroke.

High Head, when Resika lives, is an end-point for glacial Cape Cod. Here the clay that is Truro ceases and the sand that is Provincetown begins. Where neo-Venetians live is a whim of the ocean, Resika knows. The erosion on the bluff below him is stabilized by a profusion of blueberry and bayberry bushes. To arrive at the top one traverses a steep road parallel to the cliff. At the top, one backtracks to Resika's, arriving finally at a one-story stucco bungalow. Thick columns support a red-slate roof, covering a portico, where people dined 30 years ago, when the house was a restaurant renowned for its spectacular view.

Inside this villa (if villa be defined as a fine house with an exceptional location), the rough walls are smoothed with thick, pale paint, each room a different tint of almond or ivory. There is an absence of clutter. The bare walls could have been painted by Morandi, so subtle are the tonal variations. Here, on these attentive walls, the studio paintings stay for a period of study, not only by Resika, but by Resika's domestic curator, Blair, mermaid and opera singer, who has final say about what's good or bad.

In literature and in painting, the erotic pastoral is a genre that says the sophisticated city must be judged by the simple country. Simplicity, more fundamental than urban delight in ambiguity and irony, must be respected as primary. The force that dominates Resika is a secure love for life, and presiding over *that* is the fantasy of the old fish house, at the end of MacMillan Pier. This massive, cement-block structure, able to handle fresh fish from a fleet of 30 boats, was the artist's favored motif from 1984 to 1988, when the building was demolished in order to lighten the load on the over-stressed wharf. (There was some discussion of converting the building into studios for artists. See *Provincetown Arts* 1987.)

Resika, himself part of the scenery of the shoreline, was visible painting at low tide, pipe in mouth, brush in hand, his easel anchored in

the wet sand. He chuckled at a penetrating observation of his friend, the tale-teller Arturo Vivante, who pointed out that the margin of earth where Resika painted was washed twice daily by the tide, the only "virgin land" available to modern man. At sunrise and sunset, under the mist of gray days or the brightness of the full moon, Resika captured the fish house like a fisherman catching a fish. A memory, the fish house yet lives in the artist's imagination. He saw the model when he was 12 years old. Now it appears again. Resika remembered a remark by the critic Clement Greenberg: "The trouble with you, Resika, is that you have to make things beautiful. You're afraid to make an ugly painting."

A pier, by one definition, is a disappointed bridge, and can only express yearning. Years ago, by barge, an historic Coast Guard station was moved from Chatham to Provincetown harbor, where it was moored while a foundation was prepared at Race Point. It sat in the harbor, over-size, too big for the support, spilling off the sides; yet it fit right in with other dilapidated buildings. It was not afraid to be ugly; rather, it asserted itself in the world, Resika must have seen, as he sighted across his pipe stem, through the smoke of the pipe and the fog of the air, to the huge motif that, a half-mile away, was diminutive. One can feel the toy quality in Resika's pier paintings. The blunt and stubby is blown up to a gigantic scale. One is impressed by the transformation precisely because it is equal to the sway of the real building on the wharf.

A departed colleague of Resika's, Jim Forsberg, used to say that he kept looking up the word abstract in the dictionary because he kept forgetting what it meant. He preferred the definition that talks about the ability to think in pure structures, without reference to actual signs. Resika would translate that as an evocation of a thought process.

Myself, I sense levitation, a slight inclination to rise, pressing outward from the inside of Resika's color. Mass is released into chromatic equivalents. The transformation belies the weight of the material it is distilled from.

Someone once told Resika that his pier paintings looked like they were painted by de Stael. At this time he had not seen so many of de Stael's paintings, but he knew one thing: "De Stael went from abstraction to nature. I've gone the other way, from nature to abstraction."

Some artists believe that they can only realize an abstract image on the canvas if the image has the sense of being real. They suspect that a good painting is inhabited by the ghost of desire, a sensible presence, a tangible trace of a fuller form. "That's what painting's all about," Resika said simply.

Christopher Busa is editor of *Provincetown Arts*.

ON THE LEFT PAGE: PAUL RESIKA, IN THE MARGIN BEFORE THE FISH HOUSE DISAPPEARED, 1985
PHOTO BY BLAIR RESIKA

The Lonely Life

BY MARY BEHRENS

Snapshots exist in the world in a similar way that thumbnail sketches do. They are quick notations of everyday life. While attempting to provide a sense of a larger context, rarely do they attempt to elevate a fleeting scene by means of embellishment, or to stylize people in any dramatic way. Our expectations for snapshots, as for the small sketch, are rather low. When, for instance, do we ever launch into a serious critique when looking at a friend's vacation shots, or, say, riffling through a load of family pictures from years ago? With a snapshot, what you see is what you see. Some are pretty, some are funny, others are odd, and some, more often than not, are just plain boring. Snapshots are, for better or worse, the *hoi polloi* of the photographic world.

When I first saw Jack Pierson's photographs at the 1993 Whitney Biennial I was moved, but also disturbed by their strangeness. Here were snapshots, yet they were large, ungainly and simply tacked to the wall. I remember huge pictures of flowers in a field, some kind of a still-life, and clothes on a line blowing about in the wind. The images were blurry, the colors were bright, and the overall tone seemed to be one of almost blatant cheerfulness. My being disturbed by them was a good sign because it meant that my eye was taking in something unfamiliar to me. It's not that the subjects were odd—what could be more recognizable than flowers and clothes? What got to me was their very ordinary-ness. Here was the ordinary in all its splendor but *not* done up. These were photographs of no particular place nor celebrated person, and they were remarkable because they appeared to level their subject matter to neutral ground. Like snapshots, these images could be read simultaneously as both highly personal and yet, to a stranger, as lacking context and any sense of a narrative. What I have since seen of Pierson's work from his photographs, installations, and drawings has affirmed this initial notion: Pierson does not work out of any one genre. His nonchalance regarding any hierarchy of subject matter is what keeps the work both surprising and alive. Pierson's work, in fact, can encompass anything or anybody that happens to get caught in the fray of his psychic/emotional realm.

In his book *All of a Sudden* (PowerHouse, 1995) Pierson put on display what had already become his signature style. Many of the photographs were soft and grainy, extreme close-ups of flowers, abstracted bodies where only hands or feet or asses were in the frame. There is a feeling of '50s Technicolor to some of these, as there is throughout his work to date. The effect Technicolor had on movies back then was to lighten a sense of reality. This pumped-up film



JACK PIERSON, "THE LAWN COULD STAND ANOTHER MOWING," 1991

technology was a perfect tool for melodrama, and directors like Douglas Sirk (*Written on the Wind*, *All that Heaven Allows*, *Magnificent Obsession*) and Hitchcock (*Marnie*, *Vertigo*, *Rear Window*) used it beautifully—the deep saturated colors lending a peculiar, almost hyperreal tone to the tales of obsessive, unrequited, or lost love directed with such grace and finesse. Whether Pierson strived for this Technicolor feel in *All of a Sudden* or not, it seems present in many of his pictures.

One of the first photographers, along with Nobuyoshi Araki, to print pages with images bleeding right to the edge (as opposed to being bordered with a white "frame"), Pierson's style of book design is lush and evocative. He sticks to the format of *All of a Sudden* with his latest book, *The Lonely Life* (Edition Stemmler, Zurich, 1997). The border-less page conveys a sense of visual abundance; there is never a thin moment. Pierson's photographic sequence is frenetic. With no apparent chronological or narrative order to the lay-out, there is a feeling of spaciness, but spaciness with an edge. Pierson's work feels a bit like a visual equivalent of Kerouac country—on the road from everywhere to nowhere, with visions of innocence, hope, and beauty etched in along the way.

Because *The Lonely Life* contains no particular theme or subject and because there is such a wide range of images throughout the book, a viewer is left to figure out the sensibility within, and purely through visceral response. There is, for instance, a picture in the middle, a double-page spread, which shows a town built up on a hillside. Though it's anyone's guess, it looks like an Italian village. The scene is shot in a deep focus, but the foreground, a blast of pink and purple flowers, keeps the gaze of the photographer close by. This is vintage Pierson: soft light, a blur of movement somewhere in the frame, a vista at once open and closed, a world to meditate upon but not for long, and not with any predetermined notions about time or place or

simply reality. In another middle insert, an orangey-red beachscape opens up the page, with a big sky above and palm trees swaying. This photograph is shown in its grainiest form, its high speed film creating a sandy, almost miniature Benday-dot surface. It is a shot of a sunset (or sunrise), and the pink of the light becomes a haze in the frame. There is a romantic touch to work like this, yet it somehow remains outside the realm of cliché, a remarkable feat indeed, especially given the loaded nostalgia and sentiment ascribed to such known and overworked subject matter as the sunset or the sunrise.

I think one of the reasons the work moves beyond cliché, or perhaps around it, is that Pierson plays with clichés so unabashedly, and so un-purposefully. His work is filled with them. From pictures of empty, slightly disheveled bedrooms, to flowers, to an open and lonely road, Pierson ropes in the signs for individual longing, replete with association to hope, to joy and, ever lurking beneath the glimmer of surface, to despair. The photographs register as familiar ground. Pierson takes in what can be identified and through his dismantling of conventional structure, he, in effect, *undoes* images so that they are left for viewers to redo or, more pointedly, to re-imagine.

There are many pictures of Pierson's word/sign pieces in this book. Words such as MAYBE—TOUJOURS—CRY—LOST—STAY and phrases like YOU ARE ALLOWED 2 TOUCH THINGS. All are separate works, each constructed from disjointed letters, all bright and shiny colors. I have seen some of these pieces in person over the past few years and they resonate for me on many levels. They point to issues of language, or more specifically, the inability and failure of language to get across that which is, to one degree or another, inexpressible. Looking at some of these works, I am reminded of the great French director Jean-Luc Godard's remark, "American people like to say, 'What do you mean exactly?'" I would answer to them, "I mean, but not ex-

actly.” The sign pieces function as phonetic drawings. In saying a word out loud or to ourselves we conjure up an image that matches a particular state of mind. These pieces disrupt our recognition of language because language is usually viewed in another context such as a book, or heard through speech. Seeing words as *pictures* is disarming—it throws off our expectations for meaning. Pierson’s choice of words points to his desire to evoke unfiltered emotional states. Instead of photographs (or installations or drawings) his words assert presence, which is both visual as well as cognitive, and the psychic moods they conjure up are as pronounced as any pictorial image, whether realist or not.

The Lonely Life also contains documentation of Pierson’s installations created for museums and galleries. These pictures tend to read more like images from an artist’s portfolio, which is precisely what they are—records of temporary installations as the one he created using work of Edward Hopper’s alongside his own at the Whitney Museum in 1994 (“Jack Pierson and Edward Hopper: American Dreaming”). There

to JOURS

JACK PIERSON, “TOUJOURS,” 1995

is certainly nothing wrong with this kind of photographs *per se*, for it is a record of past work and as such, descriptive. But these and other similar “documentary” images seem at odds with the overall content. This is not an artistic flaw, but rather an editorial one. Installation art is work created for specific environments, and photographs of installations can only be muted representations of the real thing. There is a difference between the artist book, as a genre, and the catalogue. *The Lonely Life* tries for too much in merg-

ing the two forms, weakening the strength of the lyrical visual parade Pierson otherwise creates.

Much has been written regarding Pierson’s aesthetic of solitude and longing. On the brink of the new millennium, these are vital topics indeed. But there is more to Pierson’s eye than meets the gaze of the lost and lonely. For there is in his work, unlike much of the identity-driven art of the early decade, great leeway and room to breathe. His pictures, drawings, and installations map out territory that is at once familiar and slightly off-key. In the late ’90s, as we lurch toward the year 2000 with our computers, remotes, our cellular phones, and our uneasiness with love and work, Pierson stakes out terrain which is undeniably human: complex, flawed, and beautiful. ■

Mary Behrens, a visual arts fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in 1992, is the assistant editor of Artsmedia in Boston. Her work is represented in Provincetown by the DNA Gallery.

JAMES LECHAY

Paintings

Provincetown Art Association and Museum

BY CHRISTOPHER BUSA

This beautiful exhibition is a moment of summary from a very long lifetime, with only a few works dating from as early as 1958, when the artist was already 50 years old. Especially remarkable is the overwhelming concentration on paintings produced during this decade. One wants to conclude that all of Lechay’s vast body of work is relatively concurrent, stemming from the clarity of a lifelong esthetic, established when the artist was quite young, and reiterated recently: “Whatever I do has to be a reflection of me, whatever I am, interesting or dull. It’s me as I am or as bad as I am.”

Lechay’s hand leaves its mark on the slightly trembling surface of his canvas. He is a poet of the casual moment, forever remembered. He has a sketchy, yet exact line like Matisse, quick and calligraphic, but there is also a deliberate veneer of antiquity, acquired through repeated efforts, to make the quick impression more precise. A wash of light color may be glazed across a face, the visage turbulent with bony wrinkles that look like scratches sealed in ice. His matte surface offers an odd sense of shiny reflection, as if the image were camouflaged by the very light that reveals it. The conviction in the work appears subtly in a surface developed through actual, time-consuming labor of the artist. His faded, soft, chalky colors are so closely valued that the effect is to emphasize tiny differences in tints. It is amazing how little color he needs to give his paintings a spark. The color seems to



JAMES LECHAY, “TWO BY TWO,” 1997

get stronger as the intensity is stripped out of it. This may be due to Lechay’s mastery of gray, the vampire color, that takes on the hue of the color near it, allowing slight blues or small chips of red to haunt the gray with the ghost of their color.

In some of the paintings, a hand, or a pair of hands, presents itself, unattached to a body. I asked Lechay about the role of this hand, and he gave me an extended answer: “That’s a good question, because to talk about that hand in any way other than having a visual role will confuse illustration or storytelling with straight visual statement. I’m not telling a story. It’s a form. Psychologically it’s interesting because it leads to all kinds of thoughts and worries and wonderment, a sense of being very inward, very alone, concerned with nothing else. The visual impact is psychologically intense, but it implies something that will have to come from you, the observer. Whatever the observer wonders about it, will make him wonder, and whatever his answer is becomes a personal statement, belonging to the observer, and his property. He may be absolutely wrong as far as the painting is con-

cerned, but absolutely correct in his determination to make a judgement based on his own experience. He may like it because of those reactions which have nothing to do with the painter himself. If I’m doing a portrait or a still life, the reference has to be to me always and not to the object. No matter what the subject is, all the paintings I do are self-portraits, every single one. They are only incidentally something else.”

Lechay established himself in New York in the early ’40s. His entry in the exhibition of contemporary painting at the 1939 World’s Fair was reviewed in the *Nation*, along with a handful of notable new painters. He believed then as he does now, “You can’t avoid the past. You can’t start where Picasso left off. You can’t find the most avant-garde painting and start from there.”

In 1945 he accepted a teaching position at the University of Iowa, replacing Philip Guston, who had decided to move his family back to New York. Lechay and his wife, Rose, went out for a year to the fertile Midwest, and stayed 30. Although Iowa was a center of Grant-Wood regionalism, the art department was led by Lester Longman, who sponsored, in the late ’40s, annual exhibitions of contemporary painting and sculpture, featuring major avant-garde artists from New York.

“That first year we lived in Iowa was so quiet,” Lechay recalled. “Rose went, I don’t know how many times, to New York. The silence was noisy. We needed the subway and the elevated to sleep. But we got used to it, and it was great.” Lechay retired from teaching in Iowa in the mid-’70s. He and Rose winterized their hilltop house in Wellfleet, enlarged the

adjacent rooms and became year-round resident.

The studio is evenly divided into storage and work areas. A wall separates these two areas, and a tall, narrow door connects them. This March, when I visited, Lechay turned 90. He wears clothes, frequently blue or white denim, that are as sturdy as the canvas he paints on. His white hair is long, flowing, and glossy. His eyes are watery brown, his face wind-freshened. If it is chilly in the studio, he wears a black beret. As if to give himself a birthday present, Lechay had just completed a clay head of himself, slightly larger than life. The impulse to make that sculpture had been present a long time, Lechay said, but every time he started, he told himself he should be painting. This time he said he had to do it. The sculptor Gil Franklin, a neighbor, gave him some plasterline, and he formed strips of the material that mimic the rough, brushy strokes of his drawings and paintings.

Lechay said that after making so many two-dimensional portraits, he found it difficult to work in three dimensions. "The esthetic is the same, but it's a different language. I thought of reducing this thing to an absolute bas relief. I wanted to get one eye really deep and I got it immediately. I wanted everything else to work up to this eye. This became a focal point. Sometimes, when you're painting, and you want to lift up your color, you deliberately put a very sharp note on the canvas and have everything work up to that color. This deep eye is that sharp note. I didn't want to do that with both eyes. One eye had become so magnetic, all you would see would be the eyes, and I wanted to see the whole thing."

Lechay showed me the mirrors he used to regard himself as the subject of his sculpture. He remarked that he had to use double mirrors "because single mirrors reverse what I see. One mirror broke. When it broke, I said, 'That's enough, the head is done.'" For Lechay, the surface is alive like skin. An expanse of empty area is inevitably radiant with inflection, never inert. Why must this be? With a quiet voice, leaning forward as if to whisper a fundamental secret, which he was sure I already knew, Lechay said, "Because this has to live as a big wide area. In terms of square inches, it's the largest space and should be shown the respect of the proportion that makes it large. There can be no dead spots."

While working on the sculpture, Lechay also worked on a number of smaller paintings. One is of his son, Dan, a poet and editor, who sat for him "about eight months ago for one minute." One sees suddenly why the development of Lechay's work shows increased economy of means. "I work and know when I've got too much," he said. "It could finally be one stroke that matters too much. What I finally end up with is something I feel is simple, with economy, but I also know this has been reduced from a great complexity, so the final thing is simple. It



JAMES LECHAY IN HIS STUDIO, 1997 PHOTO JAMES ZIMMERMAN

must feel effortless, casual, as though it were created without any effort."

It is typical of Lechay to create a diptych of energy between two large fields or forces, related by their division, which may be horizontal or vertical. Rose had a droopy eyelid, which added charm and character to her face, and provided Lechay with a basic division that could be utilized formally as open or closed space. Lechay's signature style is, paradoxically, the way he makes the sketch look finished. Is a sketch, by definition, something unfinished? Not if the sketch is able to convey the full power of the living moment—the splash! as in the Italian root for sketch, *schizzo*. As a working tool that becomes its own genre, the sketch may be likened to the poet's notebook. Mary Oliver, in her revelatory work of prose, *Blue Pastures*, observes that what she writes down in her notebook may be simply shorthand or "extremely exact in terms of phrasing and cadence." The

purpose of the note is "to return me to the moment and the place of the entry. . . . The words do not take me to the reason I made the entry, but back to the felt experience, whatever it was. This is important. I can, then, think forward again to the idea—that is, the significance of the event—rather than back upon it. It is the instant I try to catch in my notebooks, not the comment, not the thought. And, of course, this is so often what I am aiming to do in the finished poems themselves."

Here, the poet describes the aim of Lechay, and hints at the harmony between painting and poetry. ■

Christopher Busa reviewed Paul Resika's painting in this issue.

The Heart's Truth

BY MARIE HOWE

I'm writing this from the fifth floor of an old tenement in New York City, and through the wall the little girl next door is crying, wailing, as she often does, sometimes for several hours straight through. Often, I wake to the sound of her shrieking and hear it throughout the day—a second child, living with her sister and parents in a space too small for even one person. "She cries," her parents shrug. Her weeping floods my kitchen, it pours into the narrow room where I write, into the sleeping alcove where we have been trying to conceive a child. Sometimes she calls out one word over and over: Mommy, mommy, mommy.

A 38-year-old friend wants to become pregnant, and the man she lives with doesn't want a child. "Not yet," he says.

Or S. and D.—two women who've been partners for years. D. tried to become pregnant through artificial insemination. When she could not conceive, S. tried, and after three months of fertility drugs, conceived a daughter who is, at this writing, four months from being born. How does D. feel? "Happy," she says, "sometimes jealous."

After years of struggling with the choice, B. decides she doesn't want to bear children; she wants to make art.

When Edison created the light bulb he separated light and heat for the first time in the history of humankind—people were appalled, even terrified. And now, for the first time, sexuality and reproduction are separated. Who will tell the stories and make the images that will help us through the corridor of these dis-orienting, liberating choices?

Two artists long associated with the Lower Cape, although very different from each other, are making art that reflects the new stories: I want to celebrate the courage and power in the work of Susan Jennings and Tabitha Vevera.

Jennings is a conceptual artist who makes installations, and although she addresses body and self images, her work is as much about the subject as the viewer's gaze. Confronted with Jennings' art, a viewer becomes a participant: "What is this?" we ask, moving in and around the pieces, "what is this?" to the feelings that rise up in us. "Exorcizing Obsession" is a shimmering column, or it looks like a column, almost Greek in its lines, a pillar of illuminated . . . what are they? Ropes? Solid? White? (Think salt, think of the woman who looked back.) Closer, it moves a little. It's plastic wrap (think: wrapping left overs), knotted to form long ropes. (Think



SUSAN JENNINGS, "EXORCIZING OBSESSION (GIRL, YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER)", 1996

Rapunzel, think knotted sheets.) The pillar is a place; you can step into its softness and stand there. Fluid, vertical, knotted. (Think worry beads, a rosary.)

From a voice in the air which is Susan's, computer-manipulated, genderless, you hear, "money, fertility, fat, love, breast cancer." The words are responses from interviews in which Susan asks women what they worry about. She then knots the plastic wrap—a knot for each worry—as an act of transformation. Repetitive action as meditative, calming (think knitting piecework). She knotted at home, on the subway, at art openings. At one point Susan's mother and sister helped her knot—a communal ritual, an underlying belief in exorcism, transforming the utterly mundane (Should I have children? Am I too fat?) into beauty embodying effort, intention, and power.

Women count. They count pounds, they count stitches, they count the days since their last period, they count money, they count the "to do's" on their daily list, they count their chickens before they're hatched. In "Biology," quail eggs, delicately wrapped, hang in Saran Wrap sacks, looking at once beautiful and awful, pus-tule and blossom, seeds and corpses, like thickened tear drops falling from the ceiling—two bunches of hanging eggs. Standing there we become the womb they would fall into, and there,

on the floor, is a video screen we gaze into: one egg after another falling and breaking onto the same wooden floor, first from the right "ovary," then from the left. Susan's manipulated voice intones "1, 2, 3 . . ." as they fall—relentless as time.

As always, the concept and the math behind Susan's work deepens one's appreciation. She's figured out how many eggs she would produce from the onset of menses to menopause—as many eggs as hang from above; suddenly jewels, rotten jewels? Precious. Ordinary.

Tabitha Vevera, always engaged in the deep realm of the erotic, has turned her attention to the mysteries of fertility and longing. Her figures, torsos only, stand as beautiful archetypes of female and male life, the life of the body beyond thought, the country of the body irrigated by its rivers of blood and nerve, the watery sea of the womb, where instinct and will wrestle and subside.

Tabitha builds up her paint layer by layer so the surface glows like skin. Looking, you want to touch the surface to see if it is warm.

The colors are the familiar blues, greens, and siennas of Giotto and Piero Della Francesca. Their frescos depict the lives of the saints; in using their colors Vevera makes the sensual sacred. The bodies are timeless—without clothes, without faces, outside of specific character and the limits of history—although the inner life of these bodies could have taken place nowhere else but right here and now.

In "Whisper," a painting that dares not state what it depicts, the fetus is curled into the *man's* watery womb. Upon the water of that womb, a ship sails. The child in the man? A possibility, an indistinct thought. Can the woman remove the child from the man's body? Where does the ship sail? What is the relationship between the life of adventure and the life of home? (My 38-year-old friend's partner says "not yet.")

In a painting titled "Egg Shells," it seems miraculous that Tabitha can paint a woman's body this realistic, this warm and compelling, without making it a sexual object. Perhaps we are privy to the sacred dialogue transpiring within it. Even without a face, without the gestures from hands or arms, the woman's body is poignant, vulnerable, but strong and definite. Perhaps because we become the face and so become too the body for a moment, and know what we hold within. "Egg Shells" depicts a woman's belly,



TABITHA VEVERS "EGG SHELLS" 1997

where her womb begins, and inside a row of broken egg shells, brown eggs as we use in cooking—lovely, undone, used, gone. ("Don't count them before they're hatched.") It's a shattering portrait of an internal sense of aftermath. An elegy for possibilities only the body can know, and hardly, if gorgeously, murmur.

Who will tell the heart's truth? Susan Jennings and Tabitha Vevers are creating images and stories we can live with. Both will be showing in Provincetown this summer, respectively, at the East End and DNA galleries. ■

Marie Howe's second book of poetry, What the Living Do is forthcoming in the fall from Norton. During the summer, she teaches a workshop in poetry at the Fine Arts Work Center.

SASHA CHAVCHAVADZE

Decorative Subversion

BY CATHY RAYMOND

Much of Sasha Chavchavadze's work, featured this winter in a two-person show at Luise Ross Gallery in New York and this summer in Provincetown at Bangs Street Gallery, uses decorative elements—needlepoint, embroidery, and landscape painting—as source material to explore structures of order within society. Removed from their original context, they play on ideas about gender roles and genteel activities of the leisure class. Her frequent depictions of stylized hands reference American primitive painting—it can be mistaken for American Sign Language—with gestures that comment on traditional women's work. Single brush strokes function as if they were individual embroidery stitches.

These gestures caught mid-motion produce a sense of a snapshot—time suspended, memory abbreviated. They relate to the work of the photographer Jeff Wall, whose large-scale images of people caught in the middle of a motion or action re-contextualize the banal and the transient. Chavchavadze's images, with delicately rendered frozen poses, arrest the repetitive action.



SASHA CHAVCHAVADZE, "GENJI SERIES #1," 1997

Her recent work contrasts charcoal drawings, of hands in the act of embroidering or knitting, with actual thread. Inevitably this work also references her lineage as a descendant of pre-revolutionary Russian aristocracy and her employment as an interpreter for emigres from the former Soviet Union. Her use of a single strand

of gold thread is resonant in the range of its feeling, from the Russian art of Ilya Kabakov to the gulag prison art made of hoarded materials, including bits of string and broken shoelaces. ■

Cathy Raymond is an independent curator and critic.

COLETTE HÉBERT

The Figure Revealed

BY ANDREA COHEN

"I was trapped," says Colette Hébert. The painter is describing a confinement born of nothing more remarkable than the standard instruments of her art: brushes, an easel, and canvas. As if describing a long relationship grown too comfortable or too predictable, Hébert explains how she abandoned her old methods and started afresh.

"In the fall of 1993 I went to New York City, and that turned out to be a decisive move for me," she says. "I felt I could take some risks, and that's when I really started experimenting with new ideas, techniques, gestural studies, colors, and forms. You explore everything and you find yourself in a cul-de-sac, and by elimination you are left with a medium that pleases you."

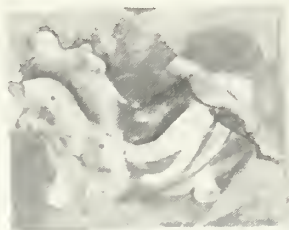
In Hébert's case, the medium involved substituting a spatula, an old table, and a square of aluminum for her previous tools. The results are paintings awash in sensuality and fluidity. Her show at New York's Gallery 54 in 1994 paved the way for current works, marking a dramatic shift away from earlier paintings that were the painterly equivalent of coolly precise, stained-glass patterns; while teeming with objects, those earlier works were devoid of people.

A native of Arthabaska, Quebec, Hébert began painting at an early age. "In elementary school I would always stay late to draw whatever was needed—a spruce, the Virgin Mary, anything. I volunteered just because I was selfish." In 1970, Hébert began studying with the Hungarian painter Leslie Shalk, a student of Matisse. Under the spell of the pure color of Fauvism and the immediacy of Impressionism, Hébert also found herself intensely influenced by Shalk's style. When a gallery owner representing both artists told Hébert, "We have the reputation of having two Shalks," she changed her course. "I stopped," she says. "And from that moment I started to create my own identity."

Hébert's subject is the human figure, most often female, in varying degrees of abstraction. Using a few brush strokes to outline a torso or the backward sweep of an arm, Hébert conjures the motion of human form in vibrant sweeps of gold, blue, orange, green, and red. At times, she seems to be molding fiery metal into the shape of a woman. In "Herring Cove," it is as if the painter has dipped a net into a churning sea and pulled it halfway out, revealing within a delicate netting of brush strokes, a woman half-delivered, half-submerged and inaccessible.

"I don't plan anything," says Hébert. "That's why I'm pouring the paint. I don't want to plan anything. I'm pouring and working very quickly and making decisions quickly. And all of a sudden there's a body. It's like watching a person. You don't know what they might do."

That unpredictability results in large part from the aluminum surface she uses. Unlike a porous



COLETTE HÉBERT, "MIAMI STUDIO," 1997

canvas, metal does not absorb paint, but rather sends the paints dripping and swirling.

Hébert's current works borrow from her earlier *lavies*, or ink washes, which use a range of colors and tones of ink on a wet surface. When painting now, Hébert pours a variety of media onto her aluminum surfaces, combining incompatible materials such as oil, acrylic, latex paint, ink, gold leaf, and a few "secret ingredients." Despite the way these myriad substances repel one another, the cumulative effect in both tone and texture is one of harmony, not discord.

Like the legions of painters who have gravitated to Provincetown and become enamored of its shifting incantations of light, Hébert acknowledges a similar inspiration. "I've been coming to this town for 13 summers," she says. "The light is my biggest motivation." Rather than focusing on light's external effect on landscape, she turns her eye inward, letting butterscotch, beach rose, and cerulean hues illuminate an emotional figurescape. Instead of dunes and waves, she gives us internal scenarios expressed by women in shifting grades of luminescence. The figure, for her, is the landscape.

For the most part, Hébert is unconcerned with figurative details in her paintings. Emotion is expressed broadly, through the body. Intricacies in facial expression, dress, or limb are minimal or nonexistent. The focus is on the body as a vessel for pleasure, desire, dreams, reflection. More often than not, the figures are shown in poses unmistakably ecstatic, engaged in a celebration at once sexual and self-fulfilling. Watching these creatures half-summoned from some stream of honey and dreams, we witness their reveries.

While easily slipping between French, Spanish, and English in conversation, Hébert is a woman of few words when it comes to titles. The bulk of her recent paintings are in a numbered series called, simply, *Movement*. The spare, laconic title is apt.

In "Movement A115-6," a golden-thighed, emerald green woman reclines inside a red swirl that, with a few brush strokes, has been transformed into a thicket of roses. So too, the woman

becomes part of that thicket, her greenness contriving a human stem from which the many blooms extend. In "Movement A107-7," a red-streaked figure reclines on a white day-bed, neck thrust back, body in a swoon amidst a mustard and deep-green backdrop. A close inspection of the surface shows how the incompatible media bubble and froth when mixed together. However, the overriding tenor is of a fluid compatibility, as if the woman and the divan and the backdrop were culled from one sweeping stroke.

In her *Tango* series, Hébert gives her figures partners in their luxuriating, adding another dimension of motion. Just as many gestures comprise a moment, two figures in motion or proximity comprise dancers, lovers, or strangers in a shared setting. Known for its passion and unrelenting physicality, the tango is also a dance that revels in the romantic, without regard for gender lines. While a woman may dance with a man, she is just as likely to partner with another woman, just as a man may link up with another man.

"Tangomania" presents two women, heads and shoulders touching, hands joined as one. The women's luxurious hips, their wide shoulders, and diving necklines serve up a voluptuous repast. Concocted from a rich drift of simmering blues and golds, brown and amber, the women appear as if they might twirl, pivot, and dissolve into the wash of color that has delivered them.

Hébert has exhibited her paintings widely in both group and one-person shows at galleries in Canada, the United States, and abroad. Her work has been shown at the Museum of Beaux Arts in Montreal and is in numerous private collections in North America and Spain. Hébert is represented in Provincetown by Passions Gallery. ■

Andrea Cohen's fiction and poetry have appeared in Ploughshares, the Iowa Review, Crazyhorse, and elsewhere. She lives in Cambridge and writes about marine-related issues at MIT.

PROVINCETOWN ON HUDSON

BARBARA COHEN
LEE MUSSELMAN
TOM MCCANNA
KAHN AND SELESNICK
PASQUALE NATALE
PATRICK WEBB
SUSAN LYMAN
MARIAN ROTH
JAMES BALLA
M.P. LANDIS
BREON DUNIGAN
POLLY BURNELL
JAMES HANSEN

BY NED DEPEW

With the beaches closed and the tourists departed, winter is the time that artists in Provincetown retreat to their studios. This year the work of 17 Provincetown artists traveled to the former whaling town of Hudson, New York, for a group show at the Carrie Haddad Gallery. The show is a surprising mix of media and styles, of attitudes and approaches—work that grapples with provocative issues at the center of the artists' lives. The artists radiate a high level of commitment to their work and demonstrate the technical proficiency that commitment has bred. The curator, Tom McCanna, has chosen some of the best talent in a town rich in artistic diversity.

BARBARA COHEN's paintings from her "Cradle Series" take a representational image as a jumping off place for a meditation on birth and death. The three paintings present three visions of the cradle: as ship, as basket, and as coffin. The "cradles" are uniformly empty, containers without contents. They hover in an abstract background of color, without connection. The ground on which they are painted is torn at the edges and not hidden by matting, so that the unfinished border of the visual statement simply trails off. Cohen is known primarily for her photography, and her use of painting and drawing here is sophisticated and subtle, with a photographer's eye for mass, color, and shadow. There is a loneliness about these empty vessels that struck me even before I knew the artist had identified them as cradles. The whiff of mortality that clings to the baby (for the child itself and for the parents who witness their own generation's passing) recalled for me Queeg-Queeg's coffin in *Moby-Dick*, where the coffin, floating on the waves, provides rescue, "cradling" Ishmael. The repeated image of the always-empty cradle is a powerful one for women, for whom choices about childbearing are central to self-definition.

LEE MUSSELMAN aggressively uses babies as his central image. He mounts old, often damaged and deteriorated baby doll parts atop distorted, soft-sculpture bodies covered with quilted material. In some cases he festoons the bodies with safety pins, like the nails embedded in African fetish art. The pieces are disconcerting: the dolls, with peeling skin and crumbling fingers, maintain frozen, appealing facial expressions. In their new bodies they are large, even powerful looking, often adult-size. The contrast of tiny heads, faces, and arms with large bodies suggests a grown person with the mind of a child. There is a whimsical aspect to the work. Bright hues and quilted patterns are playful, and the grotesquerie of the figures is partly sardonic. Musselman said his use of quilt patterns is a response to the AIDS epidemic. The safety pins recall the "safe sex" pins that many wore in the early years of the disease. There is a sort of gallows humor in the persistence of child consciousness into adulthood. "I won't grow up!" the artist insists. He is, at once, amusing and subversive.

Less threatening are TOM MCCANNA's ceramic sculptures—functioning weatherproof fountains in summery colors. Styled like folk-art, with whimsical animals including a cat with a fish in its mouth and a fiddle-playing frog, the pieces show the influence of Central American and Oriental ceramics in the lively grace of the forms and their careful composition, and they exude a breadth of reference that goes beyond decorative aspirations of much folk-art. The work harkens memories of illustrations from children's books, characters from nursery rhymes, and expresses a sweet, poignant appreciation of the innocence of that time. An ironic, and somewhat defiant, refusal to abandon the playful spirit, to accept the harsh realities of adult life, and a celebration of the imagination as the antidote to the monotony of mundane existence is a subtext of these pieces. The artist's ability to experience an idealized world—perhaps the point of McCanna's inscribed logo, "gaytopia"—makes ordinary life vivid, and is joyfully expressed.

The panoramic photographs of KAHN AND SELESNICK approach a similar theme, but from a different angle. They use the language of "reality," shaped and distorted by creative invention, to evoke a mysterious and intriguing fantasy world, which they document like anthropologists on a dig. Their images are carefully executed with a wealth of detail and painstaking composition. The costumes and settings suggest heroic, but forgotten adventures, lost in the dust of the early days of the Industrial Revolution. A tension between the realism of the photograph and the imaginary subject matter creates keen interest and tension. In their fascination with the means of creation, however, Kahn and Selesnick seem to have lost the thread of communicative purpose. In the end, unfortunately, their work recalls photographic tableaux of the 18th cen-



SUSAN LYMAN, "WHAT KNOT," 1996

tury (to which they owe a great deal stylistically)—all style, mannered and precious, without much conviction, like highly polished settings for cut glass. The idea is an interesting one and the execution is good. If the collaborators could find a way to use their talent in the service of some emotional power, they are likely to develop a new level of significance in work that is now merely charming.

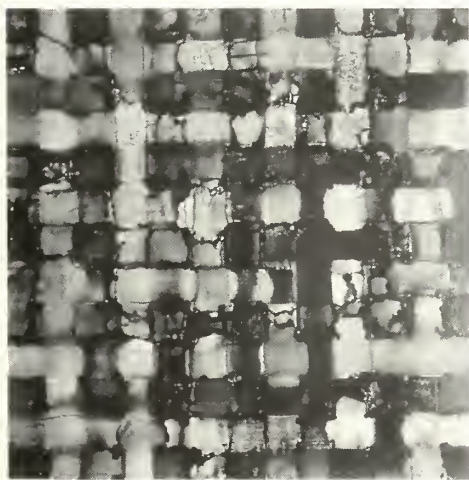
A similar problem presents itself to sculptor PASQUALE NATALE, whose painted assemblages of dominoes are pleasant to look at, but hard-pressed to rise above their own cleverness. One, titled "Gathering," uses the patterns of the pieces to suggest something dynamic and provocative, and hints at the kind of meaningful language these elements can be induced to speak, when the artist is willing to work at it.

That kind of risk-taking emotional engagement is not a problem for many artists in the show. Among the notably daring is PATRICK WEBB, with his series of paintings called "The Five Senses." The protagonist in all the works is based on the Punchinello, the simpleton of Italian Commedia del' Arte, but Webb has modified the conventional character to reflect his own concerns. Traditionally the humorous butt of jokes in the Commedia, the foolish Punchinello here symbolizes a generalized ideal of innocent purity. His experiences of the five senses range from a passive appreciation of hearing a cello and smelling a pie to actively stroking a lover, observing a doctor's invasions, and visiting a rather frightening dentist. This highly personal inventory of relationships with the world through the senses ranges from the clichéd to the shocking. The juxtaposition of the "quin-tych" invites the viewer to compare experience with the artist's in a way that can't help but be provocative. Part of Webb's agenda seems to be to draw us in to appreciating our similarities, and simultaneously to highlight the unique twists that separate us. It is an essential tension in human relationships that Webb explores with courage and honesty.

SUSAN LYMAN uses the found organic shapes of roots and branches to blur the line between the grown and the constructed, the accidental and the intentional. She asks us to examine the process by which we create those

distinctions, and how we use our imaginations to create "form" (the visual correspondent of meaning) out of found objects (paralleled by random thoughts and impressions). She joins sections of cylindrical wood into writhing coils, spirals, emanations, and bundles with compositions suggesting enormous dynamic tension. The texture and color of the work, its natural shapes amplified or set in contrast to the overall construction, all work together to add to an impression of sinuous movement. Sometimes a powerful constriction, sometimes an explosive extension, sometimes an active, seemingly momentary balance of opposing forces, her work suggests the possibility of living spirit in material that everyday consciousness, reinforced by science, sees as inanimate—literally without soul. Her work shows great respect for the beauty in raw material, which, combined with creative manipulation, results in an organic expression of its own nature. Lyman dares to subordinate her intention to the dictates of her medium, and yet manages to convey a variety of physical and emotional states with specifically anthropomorphic implications.

MARIAN ROTH's pinhole photographs also use "what is found there"—in Adrienne Rich's resonant phrase—as the basis for evocative imagery. Using a homemade, lens-less camera, she purposefully creates accidents of light and chemistry. The resulting pictures have the mildly distorted, insubstantial quality of dream images, like reality but somehow slightly "off." The panoramic scope of the images contrasts with their



JAMES BALLA, UNTITLED
COURTESY ALBERT MEROLA GALLERY

diminutive size—typically under two inches high and 10 inches long. The resulting impression, of something both vast and tiny, taken from reality, but not itself quite real, provokes an examination of how we process visual images, how the play of light on a receptive medium at once illuminates and distorts the world around us. I had a blind friend who pointed out to me that one limitation of sighted people is that they believe they have seen a thing if they have viewed it from one perspective. A blind person, in contrast, needs to feel the full object, all the way around, to have the sense of knowing it. Roth's

work illustrates this concept by exploring reality through self-imposed limitations, and awakens us to the perceptions we take for granted as "complete."

JAMES BALLA makes a similar point. "I'm making an object," he said, "not a reproduction of a scene." Painting—any art—is always an abstraction, of a thing or idea which takes on a separate existence from the thing itself. It may or may not comment on the event, image, or feeling that inspired it. That relationship is most important to the artist. The work stands on its own, and the relationship we create with it is our own. Balla's work in this show features shadowy, vague, somewhat symmetrical patterns. At first glance they seem repetitive, but on examination the elements prove to be complex and unique. Colored in sepia tones vaguely reminiscent of x-ray plates or Kirilian photographs, they suggest substantial images which never quite emerge, inviting the viewer to participate in a sort of self-interpreted Rorschach test. The artist can act as a catalyst, his abstraction enabling a shift in perception that enhances and extends the viewers' connection to both the tangible and imaginative worlds (which brings us back to McCanna). His own work is successful, Balla said, when it causes the viewer to wonder, "what is happening here?" and leads to speculation, engaging the work in inventing a satisfying interpretation.

M.P. LANDIS uses a different kind of abstraction—symbolism—to free the viewer's imagination from too rigid an adherence to preconceptions. His silhouetted human heads and torsos emerge from contrasting backgrounds, sometimes dark-on-light, sometimes light-on-dark. Abandoning specific and definite detail for a more abstract implication, Landis uses shape, texture, and brush stroke to convey a range of emotional states. His work shows the influence of "primitive" art, with its extravagant flexibility of form, its powerful figure/ground contrast, and its bold generalization, and his use of this particular visual vocabulary is clearly a conscious choice. From some angles and in some lights the figure seems to be superimposed on the background; in others, it may seem enveloped, swallowed by the darkness (or light), the boundary fading away to nothing. This ambiguity reflects a continuity of consciousness, of perception, that challenges the "is/is not" binary thinking of the late 20th century. The twisted, distorted outlines of the figure seem to imply a struggle to deal with the emergence of individual identity contending with the need for connection to our "background." This is an ongoing story throughout all examined lives. In mythology, it is often part of the hero's task to break free, which usually involves the sacrifice of that common heritage we all share, symbolized by the hero's sacrifice of his own life.

BREON DUNIGAN's sculptures provoke a wealth of associations. Assertively spherical and often nearly life-sized, they are caricature representations of female hips and buttocks, clearly referring to ancient goddess figures, cult icons of religions that flourished before being sup-



MARIAN ROTH, UNDERWATER

planted by patriarchal cultures. They have a polished, stretched quality that makes them seem inflated. A few have skinny, underdeveloped torsos, upholstered in uncomfortable-looking decorative fabrics. Most are supported on small pedestals or sets of tiny table legs that give their mass a precarious sense of being literally imbalanced. That is certainly one possible reading of them—that the focus on women as hips and buttocks, as objects without heads for thinking, arms for doing, or functional legs is an unbalanced way of thinking. These body images, with over-abundant curves, also present a strong contrast to mass culture notions of beauty, but they don't seem to celebrate what they find. The exaggeration here is not a liberating one. Rather it seems to reflect an almost obsessive, narcissistic dissatisfaction and the pain that arises from the alienation of actual from idealized self. As individual pieces, some of the works seem to lean in the direction of accepting voluptuousness joyfully—too much is just right—but as a group, there is a discomfort, a lack of balance and proportion, that adds a disturbing, cutting edge to their smooth curves.

POLLY BURNELL explores the language of symbolic objects and their relationship in space to make what she calls "expressionist landscape" paintings. In the tradition of outsider artists, with personal symbolism and a conscious disregard for many conventions of classical art, Burnell creates compact, self-contained worlds. Using conventions often seen in Mexican folk-art (and reminiscent of the work of Saul Steinberg), two of the paintings here detail an abstract, satirical view of conventional social interactions. The geometric caricature figures of human beings are accompanied by animated skeletons, one a pet on a leash, the other a sort of thought-balloon. The unusual symbolism seems to be employed to shock and disorient the viewer, to create a

confusion challenges our assumptions. Unlike those in the traditional cultures where these symbols have specific meaning, here they have confrontational, idiosyncratic value, a little like the ranting of subway Jeremiahs, that fascinate us and make us look away at the same time. Whether we dare to stop to listen, and whether what we hear if we do so is worth the risk, is part of the delicate manipulation Burnell attempts. I found it to be the weakness in her work. The messages she seems to be trying to convey—the lifeless hypocrisy of polite society in one case—seem a bit conventional themselves. In other places, the symbolism is so complex and obscurely personal as to be merely confusing. Having effectively gotten our attention, Burnell doesn't quite seem to know how to hold it.

JAMES HANSEN's paintings use familiar decorative elements combined in an original way to comment on painting and the seeing behind painting. His canvases feature an indistinct surface, abstract or impressionist with hints of pattern, or landscape through which are seen layers of highly realistic representations, often flowers. The sense is of a rift in indistinct, impressionist reality, through which a world of clarity and beauty can be glimpsed. His combination of styles recognizes the conscious manipulation of the viewer's (and his own) reality, the one the painter undertakes and must live with. The suggestion of "worlds within worlds" through the metaphor of artistic conventions has a second implication in the fragility and artificiality of consciousness, the arbitrariness of our world view. Yet the clear, colorful, and beautiful depiction of the "underworld" also holds hope.

This only begins to touch on a remarkable show. Other artists included were two painters, Bob Bailey and Donna Flax, and the highly regarded sculptor, Paul Bowen. As with any group show, there are many approaches, many media, many subjects. There is a lot of charm and beauty here. The honesty, courage, and imagination with which the artists respond to the task of re-making reality through their particular vision is what makes this a valuable and exhilarating, if sometimes disturbing, exhibition.

If there is any doubt that the artistic ferment that began when Provincetown was adopted as an art colony nearly a century ago continues unabated, this show obliterates it. ■

Ned Depew is a writer and cultural critic based in Hudson, New York.

DOUGLAS PADGETT

Hiding in Plain Sight

BY CAROLINE CRUMPACKER

In the summer of 1995, two months after the birth of his second child, a son named Emmet, Doug Padgett gave me one of the many drawings I had admired on visits to the studio where he works behind his house in Provincetown. The drawing depicts the upper third, or torso if you will, of an ordinary cardboard milk carton, the partially-open spout imprinted with "Push Up Here" and "We Love New York." Doug later told me that he chose this particular drawing for me because I am so very fond of New York City. It seems that both the drawing and his reason for giving it to me are emblematic of his work in general, indicating as they do a tenderness for the literal significance and personal attachments inherent to the objects he represents.

In drawings and paintings, environments and sculpture, Padgett has turned a steady lens on many objects that surround us, rendering them as they appear, playing with their form, always opening them up to our imagination with fresh meaning. His work possesses a surprise-in-the-everyday, like finding a never-seen photo of yourself and being startled by the pose. Padgett's objects, so woven into the daily fabric of our lives as to be almost unseeable, appear fully intact, yet completely changed. The impact of his work lies within the gently unfolding discovery that this change evokes. His household becomes a filter through which we view the world, and then, of course, ourselves.

Padgett began drawing and painting as a child growing up in Indiana. After studying art, he decided to leave the Midwest in pursuit of new landscapes. Ten years ago, he came to Provincetown. His goal was to "indicate through the creative process, the sensations and feelings that cannot be expressed in words." He experimented with one- and two-room environments inspired by James Turrell and the chapel of Mark Rothko. Padgett's spaces evoked serene, simple temples, with an interplay of light that was precise and playful. Yet he yearned to be able to "process ideas more quickly," and soon began making sculpture out of framed images on Rorschach smudges of silly putty, arrowheads in colorful packaging, and plastic sculptures featuring fences, a pistol, and a Lenin-headed piggy bank.

In 1988, Padgett showed his drawings at Circa Now Gallery in Provincetown, and the next year his wife, Heidi Marben, gave birth to their first child, daughter Esra. In 1991, they moved to New York, where he continued with sculpture and made hundreds of drawings. Working on the kitchen table at night, he drew spoons, straws—all the shapes around him—sometimes with text casually scrawled across the page, sometimes with faint aureoles of wax



DOUG PADGETT, "MILK CARTON," 1996

dripped in spots. Early in 1995, he and the Provincetown/New York artist Susan Jennings held a two-person exhibit at Jennings's apartment on East 1st Street.

The family returned to Provincetown in 1995. Padgett transferred his art supplies to his two-room studio, built a skylight, and began a new series of paintings. "Painting, for me," he said, "has the greatest range for emotional language, the greatest ability to make an image soulful." The paintings accomplish in color what the drawings do in gray and white. They illuminate and animate mundane objects with a complex gaze:

the interior of a car driving down Commercial Street in the rain, a blazing fire surrounded by an eerie curve of stones, or "Emmet's View," a low-angle, from-below rendering of a kitchen cabinet. A selection of recent paintings and drawings will be shown in July at Laura Shabatt's Provincetown Group Gallery.

The milk carton floats on its page—a glimmering fragment of collective consciousness. At once innocuous, beckoning, lonely, poised half-open like a mouth about to speak, the carton changes meaning for me every time I see it, which is part of Doug's work. The personal touch, the "We Love New York," is fixed—that is the other part of his work. Together, the parts make for a revelatory experience of our daily selves, that is, as they say, hiding in plain sight. ■

Caroline Crumpacker is a poet whose work has recently appeared in Gulf Coast, Seneca Review, and Third Coast. She lives in Manhattan and works at the Joseph Papp Public Theater.

NANCY RUBENS

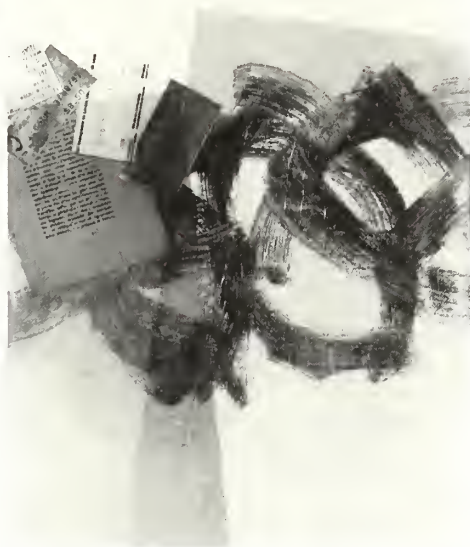
Passage of Time

BY PAUL BRIDGEWATER

Nancy Rubens is an artist who creates moody and enigmatic abstract collages which incorporate elements such as ticket stubs from trains, planes, operas, and plays, pages from a novel in French, and labels from the finest wines. The work is not intentionally autobiographical; each found object has the resonance of its own past and evidences the passage of time. There are no deliberately encrypted messages. One work, "Parabola," contains a piece of metal run over by a truck and found on Franklin Street near Rubens's Tribeca studio. It gathered dust for three years before she hit upon the right moment to use it. In her work, which will be featured in a solo show at Kir Priore Gallery this summer, there is a controlled, almost architectural structure, stirred and threatened by aggressive, calligraphic strokes which possess a sense of the vortex, as if one were being pulled into a whirlpool of energy. "Vortexes are made up of contrasting forces," Rubens says. "The same energy that can suck you under can also be used to deliver you back up to the surface. My layering of almost transparent materials achieves that. Elements surface, swell, sink, fade away. They resurface with greater force, the way memory works."

Rubens makes references to water and the seas that are at once distinct and subtle. "There is a lot of the city in my work—graffiti, rectangular shapes, light between buildings—but I can't deny that I love everything about water: the fluidity, the clarity, the murkiness, the buoyancy, the immense power. She describes a childhood memory of falling into the deep end of a swimming pool when she was too young to understand the danger of being in way over her head. She experienced it as "extremely pleasurable, compelling, sensual. From under water, the familiar blue suburban sky was transformed as if I were looking through ice, an image that has remained with me to this day. I was sorry to be yanked out. Sometimes I think I'm trying to recreate that experience in my paintings."

For several years she deliberately worked with a limited palette in order to focus on structure and form. "I would mix these incredible blues with dry pigments and stainless steel until I got the pitch I wanted. I never felt the need for more." When she studied with Leo Manso at the Art Students League, he needled her about her fixation on blue. He said it was like playing in a string quartet when she could have the whole orchestra. He kept saying, "Why don't you make a yellow one?" At the time, she found yellow and the higher-keyed colors to be irritants. Years after she left the League, she did a small yellow collage in Manso's honor, but she couldn't tolerate it. "I had to paint it green—totally obliterate it!" After he died, she finally



painted two yellow paintings, each titled "For Leo." It was a breakthrough that opened up the whole spectrum: turquoise, pale green, pink, orange, aqua. "These colors enriched my blues. I now work with all colors with the same attentiveness I gave to my original blue. I just did a painting using magenta, yellow, lavender, and pink, and I felt like I was going off the deep end. That's what I called it, "Off the Deep End," not a bad place to be." ■

Paul Bridgewater is an independent curator and co-director of the Bridgewater/Lustberg Gallery in New York.

NANCY RUBENS, "OFF THE DEEP END," 1997

KATHI SMITH

The White Line Etched in Her Heart

BY MARGARET CARROLL-BERGMAN

Tall, slender, and elegant, Kathi Smith looks more like a fashion model than the reigning queen of the Provincetown Print developed here by B.J.O. Nordfelt in 1916, with early examples very much alive today on a robust secondary market. Instead of piecing together a print using multiple woodblocks—one block per color—the printmakers treat a single woodblock as if it were a canvas, carving grooves into the block to divide the colors. The Provincetown Print is not made in editions. Each is an original work: print #1 might be in reds and greens and print #2 in blues and yellows. When printed, the grooves form white lines which highlight the design like a skeleton.

Last summer Smith curated and contributed an essay to the catalogue for "Provincetown Print: 1915-1996," an exhibition at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, featuring historical works, many held in private collections and never before seen publicly. This winter she curated a show of a dozen contemporary artists who are extending the medium, and included William Evaul's mural-sized New York skyline, the buildings tilting to music like the wobbly fish shacks in Provincetown, circa 1916.

Smith works in a West End studio overlooking the harbor. On the day I visited, she was preparing an exhibition of flower prints for Bakker Fine Arts (her Boston gallery; she shows in Provincetown at Cortland Jessup), where there is quiet belief that Smith is the first artist to capture the essence of the flower since Margaret Patterson, the gifted Back Bay painter who came to the Cape in the teens and '20s to paint flowers. If the early Provincetown printmakers



KATHI SMITH, "TWO POPPIES," 1996

tended to compose distant views of seascapes and landscapes, Smith's flowers, magnified and intricate with seeds and whorls, are delicate and precise without being scientific or exacting. She translates the feeling of the day—in "Poppies" the air is filled with rain, in "Cattails #2" the marsh is foggy, in "Morning Glories" the day is gray and the colors are intense.

Wedge between flower prints, which cover every inch of wall space in Smith's studio, is a photograph of Smith printing alongside her grandmother, Ferol Sibley Warthen, one of the early Provincetown printmakers. Warthen had learned the method from perhaps the most famous white-line printmaker, Blanche Lazzell.

For childhood scars on Smith's hands tell the story of the white line etched in her heart: at four and a half, an age when most children play with blocks. Smith's grandmother was showing her how to carve them. Her simple advice, "Keep working," guides her today: "I feel connected to my grandmother and to the place where the process was born. I am excited about continuing."

Carved woodblocks with traces of paint residue are stacked along the perimeter of the studio floor like firewood. Smith is bent over a woodblock of a calla lily, painstakingly applying layer upon layer of color before rubbing Japanese paper over the block with a spoon. Nordfelt may have invented the single block method, but it was practiced mostly by women, and was called "kitchen art" despite the fact that the earliest print artists were feminists. "I don't live in a world of computers or technology," Smith smiles, as she rubs the spoon back and forth across the paper and then applies more paint to the block and repeats the process again.

Quiet and introspective, Smith is absorbed by nature, and her prints of fields, moors, and dunes reveal details of her intimate knowledge. The supple shape of the calla lily, fluid and translucent in watercolor, moves and sways, graceful as a dance. With her newer prints she is more boldly vulnerable, exposing a paradoxical strength which she attributes to a "Japanese influence." She spends as much time coloring a single block as Japanese masters did, centuries ago, with the application of color in the multiple-block method. Smith takes up to 30 hours applying color, not to mention the preliminary obligation of carving the block. "When you take the print off the block, you can't go back," she warns. "Unlike painting, there is no room for corrections." White lines make hardedges, yet Smith is able to inject softness with gradations of color, getting more out of the image by making its substance shimmer. In her "Hurricane" series, dull color captures light at its most supernatural—during a storm. Harsh and moody, these prints of windblown sand and raging surf contrast tellingly with the flower prints.

Smith sketched for a week in the garden of West End author Heidi Jon Schmidt to produce "Heidi's Garden," with its riot of foxgloves and lemon lilies breaking outside the frame of the print, leaping the border and reaching toward the viewer. ■

Margaret Carroll-Bergman is married to the town manager of Provincetown, interviewed in this issue. Her essay "The Preservation of the Dead in the Age of Sanitary Landfill," appeared last summer in Provincetown Arts.



STERCK AND ROZO, "OF TIME AND SPACE I #8," 1996

The Equal Other

BY CHRISTOPHER BUSA

Sterck and Rozo, an artist-team, will show new work during the summer at the DNA Gallery in Provincetown, a continuation of their well-received exhibition, "energy/matter," at TZ'Art in New York. Since 1992 they have established a pattern of shooting photographs outdoors in Provincetown—where nature is large and people are tiny—and processing this imagery in their studio in New York—where the opposite is true. Artists working together in collaborative pairs, taking mutual and equal credit for work produced, are a contemporary phenomenon, increasingly noticeable. Last year the Starn Twins picked Sterck and Rozo for a show they curated in Connecticut; recently they were interviewed for a book about loving couples in artistic relationships. Rozo said she needs to be with someone who is understanding of an artist. As women, they have their own spin on partnerships, and one suddenly realizes how many shows in New York in the last five or six years have dealt with artist-couples of the '40s, where the man in every case became the best known—David Smith became the sculptor but Dorothy Dehner became an unknown. Sterck and Rozo point out that's now being reversed. The significant other is becoming an equal other. Christo's wife, Jeanne-Claude, always collaborated with her husband, but never got credit until now.

Katleen Sterck's talent was evident while in art school in her native Belgium, and she was commissioned to photograph several American artists who were planning an exhibition there, including Cindy Sherman and William Wegman. When she finished art school, eight years ago, she moved to New York and became a studio

assistant for Sherman for a month, then, for a longer period, she assisted Wegman—absorbing a keen sense of the importance of photography, in constructing images, for today's visual artists. Before Cindy Sherman, Sterck said, an artist had no chance if she were a photographer—the history of photography from the mid-19th century to the relative present is "purist and male. But from 1975, women, more than men, have made the art of photography their own."

One night in Greenwich Village, while Terry Rozo was filming members of the Sirens, a women's motorcycle club, the two met. Being bikers themselves, they produced a body of work documenting bike culture (recalling the movie, *Violators*), and exhibited their photographs in two-person shows. That happy progress swerved decisively when a bad accident resulted in the amputation of most of Rozo's right heel.

Sterck cared for Rozo while she recovered at a friend's house in Wellfleet, on the deserted elbow of Cape Cod. They drifted away from the biker's world of wild aggression and began work that was balanced, peaceful, and still. Nearby was Marconi Station, the closest point in the U.S. to Europe. The site was chosen by Marconi to send the first wireless across the Atlantic, but Sterck loved it because she felt closer to home than in New York. (Immigration bureaucracy prevented her from returning to Belgium for five years.) They came to the beach for long stretches in the winter, usually two weeks at a time, and began to use each other as subjects. At times the other becomes the model; as often, this is reversed. They prefer it when it is desolate and quiet. They cannot work in the summer in the presence of crowds. Returning to New York, they re-shoot the photograph, then photograph the photograph of the photograph, producing a multi-generational negative which they take into a color darkroom, using various color filters to

make prints. Through a process of blurring, filtering, and enhancement, the identity of the figure is lost, becoming merged with the moody environment. There appears a kind of haze around a haunted shape; it's hard to tell where definition leaves off, where nature begins. The figure is shrouded in a blanket, like a Muslim woman or a priest. (Is it true that whenever men want to look important they wear a dress or a gown?) There is not the faintest clue of gesture or personality. Beginning with their articulate autobiographical selves, Sterck and Rozo efface individuality in order to end up with a resonant image, throbbing with a trace of something beyond, a residue, like a dense mark in fog. The process is an effort to link the moment with the timeless, with the knowledge that sunset does not happen once, but recurs again and again.

"We want the figure to be very universal," Sterck said, "because we find the figure is just a representation of the soul. You can't see if it's male or female, or what race. It really doesn't matter who the model is. We prefer to use each other as a model because it's more intimate—we reach a level of concentration with each other that we can not get with somebody who does not know the process we go through. It's time-consuming. It's a lifestyle for us. Finding a location, we always go at sunrise or sunset, for a certain type of light, and the direction of the light. We get the feel of a location. We keep talking about it, and go back every day shooting until we feel like we have a group of work that is strong."

They have lots of little discussions together, "sometimes more discussion than shooting," Rozo said. The French say twilight is a time "between the dog and the wolf"—between the civilized and the free. Color vision fades; night vision invokes a process of discrimination by which nuances get shaded and developed. A new clarity comes from the dynamic energy of one consciousness interacting with another—different than generating reactions from a single brain. Perhaps there is something very healthy about having subjective experience focused through another person, who either validates, or denies, the reality. If both agree about something, reality has been achieved. "We try to catch something that's actually not visible," Sterck said. "For that to happen, we have to be into the right mood. That's where the conversations help us."

They discuss books on sacred quests. They speak of a "physics of immortality" to express material analogues for spiritual states. The motorcycle injury was significant because they were both able to utilize it as an opportunity for a healing process. No doubt, when one is confronted with mortality, one begins to shift perspective from the body to the spirit. For Sterck and Rozo, that meant a shift in geography. They do all their work here. They know they never could do anything like it in Central Park.

Christopher Busa reviewed the paintings of James Lechay in this issue.

T.J. WALTON



T.J. WALTON, "DUNE SHACK #10"

The Solitary Structure

BY TRAVIS DRAGESET

Walton's work undulates between styles and subject matter, yet what remains constant is a love of color and a contemplative isolation. Ranging from light washes with penciled lines to vibrant swatches thickly applied with a palette knife, her paintings cut irises, winding village streets, vast landscapes, and sparse interiors. But her strongest and strangest work to date is a series of a dozen paintings, completed last winter, of solitary structures pared down to evocations—Provincetown's dune shacks. These simple, desolate dwellings, built miles from civilization by artists and writers and searchers in the 1940s, emit a majestic, self-sufficient solitude. In the paintings, the shack floats between earth and sky—a central shape and a block of color that interrupts the horizon. It is amazing how so little detail provides so much delight. "Dune Shack #10"—dark green, deep red, and a solid yellow sky—is rich in texture, simple in composition, and breathes with organic ease. The shacks recall Walton's portraits in which the subject makes eye contact with the viewer or has his or her back turned; like these people, the shacks are at once direct and self-contained.

"Beauty is my religion," Walton said. "I believe in God but I also believe in color and in the spirit of color." This was not always so for her. "When I came to Provincetown seven years ago I had no idea what kind of life awaited me. I left home when I was 18 and spent several years in and around Boston. My lifestyle included heavy drinking and drug use and I had pretty much obliterated hope for my future. I never dreamed I'd own a gallery and survive from my art."

Soon after her arrival in Provincetown, Walton quit drinking and began to paint. "It took

me a long time, though, to take myself seriously. I was doing what I loved but I had no one to tell me whether or not I was any good." In 1993 Walton apprenticed with Cynthia Packard, who had absorbed a feeling for volume from Fritz Bultman and a love for the quirky shape from Milton Avery. Walton was discovering her sources.

In 1995 she spent six weeks on the Greek island of Samos. "I met a woman named Roxie Thomas, a sculptor who lives in Florida. She taught me to trust my instincts. I told her I wanted to find my own voice and she said, 'you already have.' She was right, I had."

In addition to her Commercial Street gallery, Walton maintains a gallery at 14 Bradford Street, adjacent to her studio, which she donates to four local artists each month for one week each. The first salon-style opening this spring featured Michael Carroll, Lee Musselman, Morgan Norwood, and Jim Rann. The turn-out was enormous, diverse, ultra-enthusiastic. Walton beamed, "People said it reminded them of the old Provincetown." ■

Travis Drageset is a freelance writer living in Provincetown.

MONOTYPE IN AMERICA

Singular Impressions

National Museum of American Art,
Smithsonian Institution

BY BARBARA SPINDEL

The monotype is a form characterized by spontaneity, immediacy, and experimentation. Offering both the originality of a painting and the line quality of a print, a monotype is made by painting on glass or some other smooth surface, positioning a sheet of paper on the wet image, and applying pressure to transfer the image to the paper. Tracing the history of the monotype is tricky, since so many works on paper are lost, destroyed, or neglected. This exhibit meets that challenge, presenting a fascinating account of a medium with past and present both deeply connected to Provincetown.

In addition to exhibiting the accomplished work of over 100 artists, the show illustrates how the connections and collaborations among those artists have pushed the limits of the monotype as a medium. Frank Duveneck and William Merritt Chase were among the first American artists to make monotypes, using printer's ink, in Munich during the mid-1870s. Back in the United States, Chase used the monotype as a teaching tool at the New York School of Art, where his students included Edward Hopper, Gifford Beal, and Joseph Stella. In Cincinnati, Duveneck taught the form to Joseph Henry Sharp, who spread it westward when he helped found the Taos Society of Artists in 1915.

Maurice Prendergast, who would become one of the group of urban realists known as "The Eight," developed the color monotype in Paris during the 1890s. Another member of "The Eight" inspired by the form was John Sloan, who made monotypes with his mentor Robert Henri. As Joann Moser, the curator of the exhibit, notes, "Artists continued to learn the process from one another in an informal fashion, and as they moved around the country, they introduced the monotype" to other artists they encountered.

Many of the artists who flocked to Provincetown during World War I, including George Elmer Browne and Richard Miller, had learned how to make monotypes in Paris. The first-generation Provincetown artists most interested in the form were Ross Moffett, Edwin Dickinson, and Karl Knaths, who sometimes collaborated, working in their studios at the Days Lumberyard. Blanche Lazzell, whose "Petunias II" is one of the most lively pieces in the show, came to the form as more a printer than a painter. Although she studied with Chase in New York, her bright, bold pieces have little in common with her teacher's monochromatic work. Later generations of Provincetown artists, including Nanno de Groot, Mervin Jules, Boris Margo, and Tony Vevers, have continued to experiment with the monotype.

One contemporary artist featured in the show is summer resident Michael Mazur. Trained as both a painter and a printmaker, Mazur has taken the medium in innovative new directions. His "Wakeby Night," a 1983 triptych measuring more than 6 x 12 feet, is one of the most prominent pieces in the exhibit, but I found his haunting black and white "Self-Portrait," from 1986, much more evocative. Mazur's work alone is a testament to the extreme versatility of the medium.

Overall, it is that very versatility that makes "Singular Impressions" such a standout. Among the Provincetown artists the range is astounding: from Lazzell's colorful and richly textured petunias to Dickinson's spare and moving "Backyard, Provincetown." I was left sensing the boundless potential of the monotype. Because the technique is so accessible (I, no painter, have recently made a few monotypes of my own), I felt perhaps an even greater sense of wonder as I wandered through the exhibit.

Today, many artists around the country continue to create monotypes, attracted, as ever, to the form's unpredictability and potential for play. The rich tradition in Provincetown continues as well. The late Bethuel Jamieson made beautiful monotypes, some of which he cut onto pieces to form collages. Jonathan Blum, who was inspired by Jamieson, creates monotypes as an experimental approach to portraiture. No doubt artists will continue to extend the limits of the medium in Provincetown and beyond. ■

Barbara Spindel is a graduate student in American Studies at the University of Minnesota.



MICHAEL MAZUR, "SELF-PORTRAIT," 1986 PHOTO COURTESY SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

PETER WATTS

The Landscape Within

BY MARGARET SHEFFIELD

In his landscape paintings Peter Watts has developed a style, over 30 years, which synthesizes symbolist color, abstract expressionist automatism, and post-impressionist technique to create a lyrical drama all his own. His exhibition this summer at Rising Tide Gallery, seen in the context of his entire career, suggests these three modes in which he works.

One is a distilled, introspective world of feeling, expressed with intensive and arbitrary color, as in "Purple Pond" and "Road to the Beach." Another, represented by "Dark Pond" or "Hole in the Sky," is extensive rather than intensive: romantic, visionary, even apocalyptic. Watts's

third mode—historic, ecological, semi-scientific—is inspired by his daily three-mile walk in Wellfleet's Paradise Valley. Watts is the poet of this dramatically beautiful landscape, and his paintings integrate its past, present, and eternal.

"My images," Watts said, "come from my memories and my dreams. But, at the same time, as I have absorbed this landscape and considered its every nuance of light, and change of topography or weather, my daily experience fuses with memories and dreams."

Watts's signature style employs an unusual palette in the service of what he calls "a chaos of visual strokes." In a flurry of primary process activity, which functions in his work like the automatic writing of the symbolists and the invocation of the unconscious by the abstract expressionists, Watts produces a dense weave of

allover-strokes. He puts the painting aside and permits the visual texture to work in his mind, urging his eye to see a dominant, "emerging image" that determines the outcome of the final painting. In a recent painting, "After the Rain," Watts painted a clump of trees on a small canvas. Then, after some time contemplating the smaller work, he perceived an image which formed the mood and pictorial idea for a larger canvas. In these works the apparent subject—whether pond or trees—eventually dissolves into a contemplative symbol of man's interaction with nature.

Like the symbolist painters Hodler, Gauguin, Redon, and Van Gogh, Watts expresses thought, emotion, and mood through color combinations. Sometimes, as in "Road to the Beach," he will use a dramatically unreal band of ultramarine blue or an acid yellow that captures the unpredictable mix of a landscape under certain light. In quiet works, Watts's colors are subversive and catalytic, explosive hues which charge the paintings with expressionist urgency.

Watts admires Monet's adroit manipulation of point of view and his genius in letting the apparent subject disappear while orchestrating a more universal subject. "Monet painted," Watts said, "what he knew, not what he saw."

"Dark Pond" echoes Monet's "Waterlilies" in its perspective, where the viewer levitates over the pulsing mobile views of the painting, overwhelmed by the expanse of trees, blossoms, water, and sky. Watts has purposely activated and exaggerated the dark areas in these paintings so as to emphasize the sudden mysterious moments of greatest light.

In the 1991 painting "Winter Dunes," he obliges the viewer to encounter the subject from a very great distance, as if through a wide-angle lens. In contrast, in the more recent "Afternoon Pond," the artist pulls the viewer in extremely close to the painting. From this vantage point the towering trees are a menacing, volumetric blue-black mass with Rothko-esque vibrations of tone, which, under a yellow sky, feels as if it were just above one's head.

Originally from Montclair, New Jersey, Watts says that two major trips influenced his sense of space: one to Australia when he was in his 20s, the second to New Mexico in the 1970s. "After Australia," he said, "I could no longer see myself as a New Jersey painter."

Watts's conception of and feeling for nature recalls that of Van Gogh and Cezanne for Provence, and in particular recalls Cezanne's famous remark, "the landscape is within me." To paint what he has not absorbed, a totally new landscape, is not Watts's goal. Once he tried to paint Hawaii, but found the subject too remote because he is "so involved with the Wellfleet earth."

Watts's paintings of oaks, pines, locust trees, or Wellfleet sites are sometimes imaginary, sometimes realistic, records of Wellfleet history. He painted a specific group of locust trees to signify a place formerly occupied by a house. "First Green" followed the overture of spring, when the grass becomes a silky green. "I would like to



think," he said, "that I am giving back to Wellfleet its more dignified past, when the town was agricultural and self-sufficient—before tourism."

Watts identifies with a goal attributed to Wolf Kahn—to "do Rothko after nature." Watts's best paintings are abstractions of nature, vibrations of tone. Besides evoking heat, climate, and the awe of a particular light, he evokes, like Rothko, a darker side of nature at once foreboding and spiritual. ■

Margaret Sheffield is a New-York based critic and curator.

PETER WATTS, "DARK POND"
COURTESY RISING TIDE GALLERY

WHITNEY BIENNIAL 1997

Great Expectation

BY MARC J. STRAUS

As a collector who has scoured studios for almost 30 years, who for a brief moment owned Piezo Electric, a cutting-edge gallery in the East Village, I approached this Whitney Biennial with great expectation. The curators volunteered that they had visited over 500 studios in two years and had "focused our attention on an emerging generation of artists working at new heights of complexity and ambition." While I think I've had my share of discoveries, purchased work first or nearly first (Magdalena Abakanowicz, Leonardo Drew, Rona Pondick, Osvaldo Romberg, Julie Trager), I'm happy to have others take on some of the legwork. The

joy is the exquisite surprise of finding new work that causes my diaphragm to tense. Of my studio visits, mostly in New York, perhaps one in a hundred make me suck down my breath. If the Whitney curators went all over the country and now for the first time included non-Americans, I should find at least four or five true winners. For me that would suffice; that would be a glorious show.

Never before had they curated according to my standards. It was almost as if Director David Ross decided to reward me for steadfastly suffering through every Biennial over 25 years: one that exhibited virtually nothing but color-field



KARA WALKER
COURTESY WOOSTER GARDENS GALLERY

painting, outdated before it was even hung; one that pandered to the gallery owners; one that tried too hard finally to be inclusive; one that suggested that art and politics are inextricably intertwined, one that said painting is dead, and the last a private, threadbare affair by a man of consequence who put on a marginal show. "So, Marc," David could have been saying, "this is for you. We're going to find the best of the new artists who even you don't know."

To this end, he asked Lisa Phillips, veteran of five prior Biennials, to curate. She in turn chose co-curator Louise Neri, a young outsider/insider and American editor of *Parkett*. Together they told us, "art is an endless intersecting loop between imagination and reality, possibility and improbability, fact and fiction." I accept that, but I am suspicious when they add, "the works we present deal with the poetics of surveillance rather than its politics, how you actually experience the processing of observing." I have no idea what they mean. Later they add, "it's more a matter of identity poetics than identity politics." With that I went to see the show.

Emerging from the fourth floor we are confronted by a huge structure—a life-size room propped up at a 45-degree angle. Later I learn that Glenn Seator, a New Yorker with only one gallery show (in L.A.) to date, faithfully recreated Ross's office. I had the ill-mannered thought that it would have been far more interesting had Ross been seated at his desk at set hours. So far, one for one. Seator was new to me and I thought the work interesting, even if it might not wear well.

Next, Richard Prince. Well known for over a decade. Modest-size canvases abstractly painted and reminiscent of Terry Winters, with one-liner jokes at the bottom. Poorly painted, hum-drum. One for two. Katy Schimert. Two for three. Her work, also new to me, is represented by a melange of objects: a wall-drawing with aluminum and ceramic vessels on a table. Good, but doesn't raise my blood pressure a notch. Then Bruce Nauman's video, seen recently at Castelli, and Richard Phillips's highly realistic paintings of women, which I had seen at Ed Thorpe. And then Kerry James Marshall, whose work I know well: large, well-painted depictions of a "white-washed" Black America.

In the next room a nice surprise. Sharon Lockhart's quiet, contemplative (but too-tame) color photographs. Juxtaposed in the center of the room, a monumental allocation of space to Jason Rhoades, L.A. wunderkind. His installation, "Uno momento/theatre in my dick/a look to the physical/ephemeral," was packed with plastic pails, food, bubble bath, and rap music. It was raucous and irreverent, but ultimately inert and deadening. Fine theater, quintessentially American, but in comparison to its antecedents—scatter art of the '60s (Le Va and Serra)



JOHN SCHABEL, "UNTITLED (PASSENGER #2)," 1994-95. COURTESY MORRIS HEALY GALLERY

and Arte Povera (Mario Merz)—weak and disjunctive.

The six spartan rooms by grand master Ilya Kabakov recreate a sanitarium where the aged are shown slides of relatives to stimulate and engage them. Another newcomer, Chilean Cecilia Vicuña, has an uninspired net on the ceiling, but two wonderful slate platforms on the floor, one with shells and the other with wool on top. I will try to remember her. Then Shahzia Sikander's pigment and tea water renderings on hand-made paper, mimicking Persian miniatures, are delicate and captivating.

On the third floor the idea of the show becomes more obscure. The entrance is immediately dominated by an installation by veteran Chris Burden. "Pizza City" comprises six tables covered with many-styled model cities—old European, Art Deco, futuristic, even an Iraqi airport. For all the allure and detail, I found it ultimately monotonous. I like John Schabel's black-and-white photographs of passengers through airplane windows. I also like one of British artist Matthew Ritchie's paintings, despite

its references to the brain. (I generally detest work that resonates with my work as an oncologist.) Again, too-tame photographs, this time by Paul Shambroom and of missile storage facilities; well-known and playful pop constructions by Charles Long; and another L.A. artist showing at David Zwirner's gallery in New York—Diana Thater, whose room installation is better than Rhoades's, even though she tries for too much. Most of the rest are big yawns: Bruce Connor, Aaron Rose, Jennifer Pastor, the last with an installation of, what else, "The Four Seasons." Sue Williams and Lari Pittman, back in the Whitney again, both with highly ritualized paintings.

At last a true newcomer, Bryan Crockett, who has some work in the basement of young Soho dealers Boesky and Callery and brings us here a large-scale, intestine-like sculpture of balloons, lights, nipples—contorted and sexual. I should hate it. It's anatomical and completely over-the-top, but it works, an abstract drawing in space.

Kara Walker takes up the front wall on the second floor. Only 27, she's already well-known for her wall-mounted, cut-out silhouettes depicting Black slavery. So-so wall-maps in lace by Puerto Rican artist Antonio Martorell, and some more Ed Ruscha paintings. Michael Ashkin, relative newcomer, shows a model of a desolate desert landscape, and is worth watching. Tony Oursler provides more projected speaking heads, and Clemente shows predictably good drawings.

The surprise, the single piece that made me gasp, was by 85-year-old Louise Bourgeois. So much for the hype about discovering the young and the new. "Pink Days and Blue Days," a pole and spokes hung with clothing and a characteristic pink personage, is clear, perfectly balanced, personal. Here, "poetic" is acceptable. This is mature work by an artist the youngsters should pay attention to. She knows exactly where to stop while so much else in the show is unnecessarily excessive.

Finally, I am obliged to suggest some oversights, reveal some studios perhaps not visited. Leonardo Drew has been missed three times now; Linda Matalon; Robert Bauer, whose small portraits are surprisingly compelling; Bruce Robbins, who made the Biennial in 1981 and is now gallery-less but making truly great paintings; Matvey Levenstein; Scott Reeder, a 26-year-old graduate student in Chicago. If I could include foreigners: Yayoi Kusama; Callum Innis; Juan Muñoz; Rachel Whiteread; and Anselm Kiefer has hit it again.

Dustin Hoffman, as the autistic "Rainman," obsessively repeats the refrain from the Abbott and Costello routine "Who's on First." After ingesting the requisite hoopla and rhetoric surrounding the Biennial, and making a careful second visit, Hoffman's never-answered question seems incisive. This Biennial, clearly meant to demonstrate that The Whitney is on first, that its curators found the best of the young talent, finally comes off as safe and barely entertaining. It is an exhibit without a center, without clarity, belied by the discourse, a Biennial with great promise, but failing in part because it doesn't stay the course. There are too many voices in the walls, too many pressures. Or else, despite every good intention, the curators simply were unable to discover the new talent. And in truth, although discovery and validation are the underlying premises of the Biennial, and this one made the attempt more than any in recent years, this is not what The Whitney does best. It is a grand place for review and mid-career retrospectives. But look back at the Biennial catalogs from the '70s and '80s—how many former new-comers remain? ■

Marc J. Straus, M.D., is a collector of contemporary art and president of the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art in Connecticut. His first collection of poetry, One Word, was published by Northwestern University Press in 1994.

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Ask Dr. Mueller: the Writings of Cookie Mueller

High Risk/Serpent's Tail



Last year, one of my students, a thoughtful, squinty-eyed young writer from Lawrence, Kansas, told me an amazing story: back in 1989, on his first trip to Manhattan, he wandered into an East Village gallery where dozens of people clad in black—painters, performers, actors—were paying loving tribute to a young woman who'd died before her time. Though supremely conscious of his erroneous outfit (scuffed Topsiders, tattersall shirt, blached khakis), he pulled up a chair and listened, mesmerized, as the mourners told stories, both wacky and touching, about an extraordinary creature named Cookie Mueller.

"Cookie Mueller?" (Already I saw it: the opening for the filmed version of her life.)

His smile was shy, puzzled. "You've heard of her?"

"Scott," I said, "Scott," shaking my head.

The fact was that Cookie—can I call her that?—had been one of my imaginative angels for years. How to explain such a fluid, complicated soul? I told him this much: she'd been a winning presence, with her honeyed, raspy voice, in the earliest John Waters films, from *Multiple Maniacs* to *Female Trouble* to *Desperate Living*. She'd been the writer of a warm, witty health column for drug addicts, sexual enthusiasts, and urban renegades. She'd been known to snort instant coffee in the morning, because she "didn't have time" to make it the normal way. She'd been the inspiration for countless drag queens (and drag queen wannabes) with her exuberant eyeliner and ratty, glamorous hair. And she'd been the subject of an almost unbearably poignant tribute by Nan Goldin which chronicled their 13-year friendship, with photos ranging from the Crown and Anchor dance floor to Cookie's empty apartment following her death. Who could even look at that image of her in that black cocktail dress, head thrown back in an unguarded, high-spirited laugh, without longing to be in her presence? A bad girl with a heart of gold. As Nan herself says, "a cross between a Tobacco Road outlaw and a Hollywood B-girl," the most fabulous woman she'd ever seen.

But, deep down, I suspected that she was more than a mere archetype. I'd known from several reliable friends that she was a gifted, accomplished writer, and though I'd only seen bits and pieces of things, I wanted more. Now, to my delight, her essays, stories, and columns have been collected in a single volume.

Ask Dr. Mueller records the adventures and musings of a restless young woman from the Baltimore suburbs who managed to reinvent herself many, many times over the course of her

short life. Here we get it all: her brief foray in a mental hospital; her stint as a go-go dancer in North Jersey bars; her travels to Berlin, Jamaica, New Orleans, Positano. We learn of her discovery by John Waters after she wins the door prize—a free dinner at the Little Tavern, a lowdown hamburger joint—at the world premier of *Mondo Trasho*. We learn of her mother's tantrum after she happens upon the screenplay of *Pink Flamingos*, in which her daughter is to be fucked by a beheaded chicken. We learn of her abduction by two sinister creeps as she, Mink Stole, and Susan Lowe hitchhike from Baltimore to Cape Cod. Describing their roadside attire, she says: "Mink the redhead was dressed casually as always in a black leather jacket with chains, black fingernail polish, and tight black Levi's. Susan, the brunette, was dressed as was her normal wont, in a daytime low-cut evening gown, and I, the blonde, was dressed conservatively in a see-through micro-mini dress and black velvet jacket." And, of course, there's Provincetown. Not surprisingly, the experience of spending a winter here hasn't changed much in 27 years. In 1970 most year-rounders are barely getting by on unemployment; a goodly percentage are shivering inside poorly-insulated cottages. To cope, Cookie takes daily trips to the dump in search of items for her Saturday yard sales, as Divine stands off to the sidelines in a "full-length mink coat on top of mountains of garbage, his head crowned with circling, screeching seagulls." A few paragraphs later she relates the now-legendary tale of how she and Divine pilfered a Christmas tree from somebody's front yard: "I got a shovel. We went to the Blue Spruce house. I picked out a good one and started to dig it up, very quietly in the dark. It took forever, the roots were impossible. Finally I gave up trying to be nice with the tree and sawed it down." It's hard not to read this book without being struck by the writer's will, her sheer capacity for hijinx and low comedy, but Cookie, ever the realist, never the poseur, refuses to romanticize herself: "Why does everybody think I'm so wild? I'm not wild. I happen to stumble onto wildness."

These pieces would be good reading for the sake of content alone. But there's so much fresh writing here that it's impossible not to be thrilled. If that comes as a tiny shock, it's only because these pieces are delivered in such a modest, unpretentious fashion. Not only is this work notable for the controlled intimacy of its voice, but for the precision and exactitude of its details. Here's a description of a desperate friend who shows up on her doorstep in need of a place to crash: "Frieda was tall and thin, with very blond hair beyond unkempt, and pale blue eyes that she never used makeup on. Lots of things about her face reminded me of women's faces in Van Dyck or Rembrandt paintings, mostly it was the attitude of the mouth, the white expanse of forehead, and the total lack of eyelashes." Mueller also recognizes the authority of a good opening line: "I accidentally burned a friend's house to



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the ground once." Or the absolute pleasure of getting the right word in the right place: "[They] never held a nine-to-five job because they were too odd-looking, or sassy, or overqualified." But most of all, she renders these tales with the disarming compassion and empathy that's characteristic of all great writing. In a piece about working at a men's store catering to black men, she writes about having to phone customers who were late with their payments: "It's the worst kind of phone call to get, and for a person like me, it was even worse to make . . . I had to invade lives over the phone, disturb people while they were watching television or washing dishes or having sex. It was horrible." Even in the midst of the aforementioned abduction tale, which recasts a ghastly, harrowing experience in comic terms, she manages to locate the humanity of her kidnappers: "There comes a time when even the most optimistic people, like myself, realize that life among certain humans cannot be easy, that sometimes it is unmanageable and low-down, that all people are quixotic, and haunted, and burdened, and there's just no way to lift their load for them. With this in mind I wanted to say something to Mink and Susan about not antagonizing these sad slobbs." These moments are never forced; they're welcome and refreshing because she could have taken the easier route, tossing it off in a cool, deadpan voice. But these pieces are anything but cool. This is a writer who's entirely open to the world in all of its wonder and dread, who isn't afraid of risking deep feeling or ebullience. In one of my favorite passages of the book, in which she's riding the back of a motorcycle on the Amalfi coastline road, she says: "I was afraid my eyeballs would explode. Could a human being hold this kind of beauty in their eyes without going blind?"

Perhaps the strongest, most artful piece in this collection is the most eccentric. "The One Percent" is a loving fable about Dodge, a watersports enthusiast (I'm not talking about parasailing) who initially blames others, particularly his mother, for his idiosyncratic drive. "It was wrong, he thought, to relish pee the way he did, but it was his secret. . . . There he was, sassy in the dark, the Dodger with a mug of gold." Unfortunately, it's the 1980s, and all over New York, people are dying one after the other. Dodge tests positive for HIV, forcing him to confront his mortality, to rethink his life and singleminded desire. I won't give away the rest of the story, but its ending turns its deceptively simple, satirical opening into a radiant tale of forgiveness and the necessity of community. Similarly moving are two other works: "A Last Letter," a chronicle of the corrosive presence of AIDS among her friends, and her untitled homage to her husband, Vittorio Scarpati, a visual artist who preceded her in death by seven weeks.

"Sometimes when you first meet someone," writes Peter Rock in his novel *This is the Place*, "you realize how long you've been missing them." I have that strange, strange feeling about this book, and about the person who wrote it. I can't help thinking that had we been together

in another time, we'd have been pals, walking up and down Commercial Street, surveying the sights, saying hello. I trust you'll feel that too—this book's that valuable, that sweet. I'm grateful it's in the world.

— PAUL LISICKY

Sections from Paul Lisicky's forthcoming novel Lawnboy appear in Best American Gay Fiction Volume 2 and Men on Men 6. He's currently working on a novel set in Provincetown.

PHOTO: LAWRENCE IRVINE



FRED LEEBRON PHOTO BY TOM LEVY

Out West

by Fred G. Leebron
Doubleday

A grim but gripping story of murder and moral drift, corruption of the spirit and a slow, painful slide to a place of empty recognition, Fred Leebron's first novel is not for the squeamish or the Sunday fiction set. It opens with Benjamin West passing through Lovelock, Nevada, on his way to California, having been just released from prison, burned out on junkfood, caffeine, beer, and too many nights sleeping in his car, unsure of who he has become, and steeped in the ripe odor of his unwashed body. At the hotel he checks into for some proper rest, he gets drunk on an empty stomach and finds himself left with a mildly retarded woman whose sister wants to abandon her temporarily for a good time with someone else. Compelled by his own sexual longing and the retarded woman's uncomprehending willingness and naiveté, he fucks her (which, while generally unperturbed, she does not enjoy), afterwards forcing himself to vomit. And it's all, as they say, downhill from there.

By presenting such an appalling self-loathing and despairing myopia, Leebron takes a terrific risk with this opening, which leaves the reader no one to "identify" with; indeed, Benjamin West is so utterly abject, he himself has difficulty identifying with the main character which, after all, is *him*. Leebron thus constructs a narrative that strains, in a sense, the conventional imaginative transaction between a reader and a novel. Rather than drawing the reader into an early empathy with the protagonist, Leebron gambles to transfix the reader initially with the gritty textures of a fast-paced realism and West's uncertainty about who he is and what he is doing. Only as the predicament darkens for himself and the woman he meets, Amber Keenan, do the characters' interior lives become increasingly avail-

able—to the reader, as well as to themselves and each other—the violence that would otherwise intensify a numbing self-alienation working instead as a mordant warming of intimacies.

The two meet at The Golden Gate, a run-down residency hotel in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco, where West has taken a security job. Amber, who works for an ineffectual neighborhood literacy program run by the Sisterhood, has recently premeditated and executed the murder of her lover—a callous, manipulative, parentally bank-rolled aesthete, taken with candid infidelities, kinky unpalatable sexual acts, sporting a black cape, and writing post-avant-gardist “language” poetry (no doubt confirming the worst suspicions of many that at the heart of every “language” poet is a cruel and indifferent moral emptiness—*match*.)

With a second killing this time involving West, who saves Amber's life, the two are drawn into running an elaborate and hair-raising psychological gauntlet in an attempt to get rid of the body; it's as if two intelligent yet desperate characters out of a Raymond Carver story had discovered themselves haplessly trapped in the extreme world of Jim Thompson, where shooting someone is just another way of saying good-bye.

Having appropriated the genre of the post-war *noire* novel, however, Leebron expands the form to allow for a far greater range of emotional expression, the hard-boiled affect of the characters, as well as the prose itself, continually giving way in tone and substance to more modulating interior reflection—when Amber, for example, discovers her desire to bear a child, or West's bewildered meditations on the wrong turns his life has taken. Correspondingly, the lugubriously stylized and mannered descriptions that the genre owes to the virtuosity of Raymond Chandler have been stripped back down to a Hammet-like realism, so that the ironies of death, betrayal, and urban decay in the sun-drenched state of Hollywood, beatnik glory, and the good life are present but barely noticeable in the landscape Leebron renders:

On Van Ness were movie theaters, restaurants, a bookstore, tennis courts in a diagonal valley and beyond that flatlands gleaming with streetlights and the lit windows of houses. Then came rows of identical slapped-together apartment blocks, with raddled roofs, beige siding, chain link fences, graffitied sidewalks. Past a windowless police station painted metallic blue, they ascended a hill. She looked back at a patchwork of public housing, a thin line of commerce, and the mud-colored Tenderloin. The sun still hadn't set and she had half-finished her beer. West's was already empty. She opened another bottle and exchanged it for the empty one. Their hands touched briefly in the transaction.

Or this description, as the two move south to dispose of the body:

Soon they were ascending the long roll of land that separated L.A. from the rest of the world. It was still dusk, endless before the solstice, the highway far wider than it needed to be at this time of day, the traffic bare as it struggled over hills and dipped and climbed again. There were a few bedroom communities planted on the slopes, their lights quaint against the russet and azure spreading of early night. She came to a dark stretch of highway muffled by rhododendrons, and a roadside sign said she'd reached Los Angeles. She had 20 miles to her exit. For the first time in a while she looked in her rearview mirror and there he was, the eerie outline of his baseball cap backlit by the old wide set of his single headlights. The road, under the halogen lamps and the last burst of sunset, was turning steadily orange and she had a vision she was driving on fire.

This is the book's poetry, rich, considerable, and not incidental. In fact, it comprises the very source of Leebron's vision, which is larger and deeper than the narrative *per se* might suggest. Leebron signals as much in his choice of the novel's opening epigraph from a poem by Robert Hass, whose work has become famous, in part, by way of celebrating the natural and cultural life of California: “. . . it is a test, / this riding out the dying of the West.” The plight of Benjamin West, then, takes on an allegorical valence that remains implied throughout, most vividly in the depiction of a life saturated in the dying light of consumer products, and the scrubbed commercial fictions that exist in such discrepancy to the shabby lives they beckon. The rotting corpse of the symbolic social and cultural body, however, is never present as an explicit editorial; Leebron evokes it only indirectly in the actual reek of the corpse rotting in the sun-baked trunk of West's car, that he and Amber continually spray with Lysol as they search for a burial spot off the California freeway. And the decomposing human meat mingles with the reality of West's own rank odors, the inescapable “smell of himself,” of a wasted life he cannot stand though he struggles to understand it.

By the end of their dark adventure, West realizes that in his downward spiral:

everything about him would begin to smell of rot, and he'd have to go to the agencies, and a social worker would take his case, and eventually he'd get on a program for ex-cons and develop a skill and wear a tie and sweater and be head of interoffice mail delivery at a corporation and polish his act and apply to and be accepted by graduate schools because of his interesting demographics and progress toward his Ph.D. and when he was 40 or 45 be released into the clinical or academic world, meet someone, get married, buy a home, have a car, work, retire, die.

Such fatalism may pervade an environment of millennial decay, but fate, Leebron makes clear (as clear as in Hardy) is an expression of charac-

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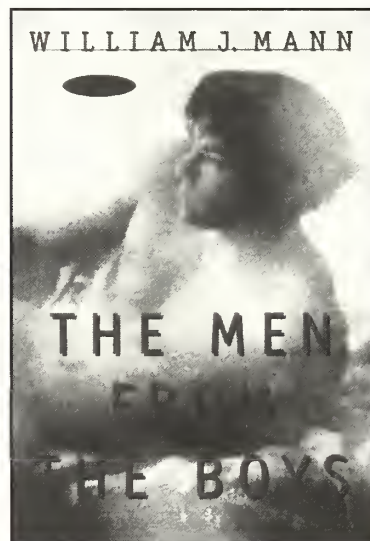
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by Ellen Dudley

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Ellen Dudley, born in Harvard, Massachusetts, is the founding editor of the *Marlboro Review*, and a partner in a construction company in Vermont. Her poems have appeared in *Agni Review*, the *Massachusetts Review*, the *Poetry Miscellany*, *Provincetown Arts*, *TriQuarterly*, and other periodicals.

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ter: as West himself confesses to his prison rehab leader, "I'm not going to be anybody else so I'm not going to think about being anybody else."

The novel's captivating and agonizing repetitions—the necessity of digging up and re-burying the body as if it were a kind of tell-tale heart; or the reappearance, like some embodied fragment of West's conscience, of the retarded woman and her sister—such hauntings jack-up the tension at the same time that the narrative avoids any of the generic twists and turns of plot, the bludgeoning reality of the gruesome task at hand generating the paranoia and convincing psychological edginess between West and Amber that keeps the story driving forward. And it is not, as you might guess, a happy ending.

But neither is it tragic, cathartic; nor redemptive; nor even cynical. West is not, finally, guilty, though he feels himself a guilty man, as if his time in prison had been a prefiguration for the situation in which he finds himself, trapped by circumstances and his own character. The clarity of that predicament makes Leebron's first novel of the real, morally blurred world we inhabit a promising and mysterious intimation of the work to come. The form it will take one can only guess, as Leebron seems neither committed to, nor limited by, the genre he adapts so ingeniously in *Out West*.

—JOSHUA WEINER

Joshua Weiner is the writing coordinator at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown. His poems and essays have appeared in *Best American Poetry*, *American Scholar*, *Threepenny Review*, and elsewhere.

Heaven's Coast

by Mark Doty

HarperCollins 1996

Don't open *Heaven's Coast* expecting another *Borrowed Time*. Though both books were written by poets and spring from the same experience—the devastating loss of a longtime lover to AIDS—the similarities end there. Monette's book reads like a rant raised to the height of literature: unrestrained fury, fear, bitterness and howling pain blasting through his pages like a fierce torrent. Mark Doty—a rising star on the national poetry scene whose four volumes include a National Book Critics Circle Award winner—is a more reflective writer. His *Heaven's Coast* is a polished thing, a book pooling over with vividly shimmering descriptions, metaphors burnished until they give off a deep glow. Unlike Monette, who hurtled headlong through his pages, Doty writes with restraint, holding himself in check to mull through all implications poetic and spiritual.

Early in *Heaven's Coast*, Doty describes a journey he makes to Boston after his lover Wally's death. Noting that "being in grief . . . is not unlike being in love," Doty walks through the landscape of the beginning of his relationship with Wally, the heart of which is a decaying, nearly

empty apartment building on Beacon Street. He happens upon one of the few remaining tenants who lets him in: "He opens the heavy black door with his key, and suddenly I am almost overcome by a sense of wonder and strangeness. It is as if he were opening the gates of a tomb, some ancient place, little disturbed, still containing the artifacts left with the dead."

Who else except a poet would stumble on a site so replete with significance and rich symbolism? Doty likens his guide here to Dante's Virgil and the old building itself to an underworld: "I feel the whole weight of the past above my head, floor after unoccupied floor of history, mine, others . . . all the men I knew in that house, that stacked repository of time and memory are dead." Doty takes what could have been a poem with a centerpiece metaphor and extends it instead over the length of a chapter, layering in story upon story of narrative texture. In the age of AIDS, entrusted with several lifetimes of stories not his own, Doty turns to memoir, a place flexible enough for poetic voice and narrative story, both.

Not that his narratives are all the straightforward kind. Doty tinkers with the basic beginning-middle-end formula of story in ingenious ways, most notably at the halfway point in the book where—Wally already months dead—the narrative doubles back on itself, circling back to the event that set the primary chain of events in motion: the HIV test the couple took in the spring of 1989—the test that told them that Wally was HIV-positive and Mark was not. "I remember going and standing behind him; he was sitting in a wing chair, I don't remember if he was crying, but I remember the stunned aura around him, the sense of enormous rupture—not a surprise, but nonetheless a horror, an announcement fundamentally inadmissible. . . . I remember thinking it didn't matter which of us it was, that his news was mine."

Yes and no, of course. Much of what he has to tell is a twin-tale, the story of a couple dealing with AIDS together—one partner ill, the other healthy. In that spirit, "we" is a pronoun Doty uses a lot. Through the book he relates the history of his and Wally's relationship, starting with their chance meeting in an out of the way town, on through the passion-fueled turbulence of their first year and a half in Boston. A few years later when Doty got a teaching job in Vermont, the two moved up to the small capitol town of Montpelier and bought a house. Doty relishes the details of their various homesteadings, furnishing us with an especially delightful intersection of gay man's and poetic sensibility: "All the energy we poured into the house in Vermont couldn't complete it; it was so big, and so needy, that I used to dream, even after five years, of part of the house falling away, the sloping floors gone their way at last, tumbling in the direction they'd always pined for. . . . There was barely time to enjoy that particularly homosexual pleasure, decor . . . paint peels, plaster cracks, and gardens, of course, are the most ephemeral constructions of all."

*"The work of soul-making goes on,
I think, as the world hammers us,
as we forge ourselves in response to
its heats and powers."*

Realizing that they were going to need more services and solidarity than Vermont could provide, Wally and Mark relocated south the following spring to Provincetown, where they bought another old house, got a dog and settled in for the storm. It was not long in coming. Over the course of the next year, it became obvious that Wally was declining—not into the more dramatic illnesses usually associated with AIDS like pneumonia or KS, but into something at first more subtle and mysterious: "a weakening and fading," which eventually Wally's doctor thought likely was PML: progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy, a rare condition in people with AIDS that leads to stroke-like symptoms. This makes for an altogether different AIDS narrative: not the tumultuous ups and downs of infectious diseases battled and won, but a slow erasure. Doty, who in his poet's way must make everything over into metaphor, thinks here too of Dante's descent into the underworld, but transforms the image: "I imagine that the god of hell doesn't come out to meet us in chariots and fire, infernal stallions stomping and champing and foaming; it's that the dark god turns the body of the descendant into himself, making it of a piece with his darkness."

Though with these kinds of variations, the story of Wally's descent into AIDS does share common ground with other AIDS narratives: here are the bewildered doctors, the support groups, the plucky home care workers. Here too are the friends and family who can deal—and the friends and family who can not. Doty is obviously pushing himself to tell the truth on the page about what he sees and feels about this cast of players—revealing, for instance, his resentment towards Wally's gay brother Jim, who fails to visit Wally when he is dying. Doty spells out the ethical problems he has with Jim's New Age philosophies, contrasting his own evolving spiritual themes. But—mindful of his own ethical imperatives—Doty works double time to bring a dose of compassion to his deliberations on Jim, who is himself HIV-positive.

It's in part this kind of leave-no-stone unanalyzed process that can make the book seem at times too carefully constrained, steeped in excessive consideration, however graceful. But just as Monette's breakneck unreflection was both his strength and his weakness, so too does Doty pack power in his thoroughness. Striking examples of this are his descriptions of Wally's death. Intimate and yet unsentimental, clear-eyed and yet deeply spiritual, Doty takes us through every nuance of Wally's passing. Likewise, he never blinks when he paints us a portrait of his lover's dead body: "There was a deep calm to his face; he seemed a kind of unfathom-

able, still well, which opened on and down beneath the suddenly smooth surface of his skin. Which seemed polished, as it cooled, though not stiff; it was as if his body moved toward the condition of marble, but marble that's been palmed and warmed, touched until it picks up something of human heat."

Many stories end here, with the lover's death. In Doty's book, the illness and death of Wally, though crucial, function as subplot, the catalyst for what constitutes the larger plot: the author's own passage through grief. When Doty cites the *Book of Job* to clarify points, he's not kidding around. Referring to passages in Stephen Mitchell's translation, he notes: "Job's losses are horrific, and delivered to us in swift passages of prose as if to get . . . on to what matters, the sufferer's negotiations with the nature of reality." Doty can get a bit teacherific, but it's obviously his own way of working through things, as if his brain were the front of the train and his feelings the engine. When he describes himself reading from *Job* alone in a borrowed New York apartment, it's easy to picture his revelation coming to him in a similar manner, a river of emotion suffused with intellectual clarity.

In keeping with this angel wrestling, Doty means *Heaven's Coast* to be the inspirational tale of a latter-day poet-pilgrim—an ambitious claim on archetype for a memoir to make. To measure up, Doty establishes early on the connection between his poetic sensibility and his spirituality, describing how his first religion was a religion of imagery given him by his grandmother: "a mythic landscape of hymns, with their rivers and flowers, their cherry trees and blood and moons." Doty also links desire and the soul, and both to imagery, in a wonderfully queer theology that is liable to spark many a lapsed poet: "there is somehow in the grand scale of dune and marsh and sea room for all of human longing. . . . The divine, in this world, is all dressed up in mortal clothes, and longing and mortality are so profoundly intertwined as to be, finally, entirely inseparable."

This is just the beginning of his framework. We have to backtrack through months of Wally's decline, his death, and then—impossible blow—the death of Doty's close friend, Lynda Hull, in a car accident two months later.

The chapter Doty writes about Hull stands out for a number of reasons, but the primary is perhaps its preponderance of conflict—manifest not only in Doty's relationship with Hull at the end of her life, but also in the writing itself as Doty strives to do her justice, and convey the gritty specifics of their separate and mutual struggles. Here Doty's poetic voice, relatively constant throughout the rest of the book, breaks as he describes the difficulties he had with Hull's addictions: "I think, What I've done for years when my friends fucked themselves up with chemicals, is guard myself, run away. Do I have to hide from her? How can I take care of myself but also behave responsibly toward someone I love?" Conflict, here as always, reveals character, making parts of Doty come through clearer than they do in the rest of the book.

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Apart from conflict, Doty reveals himself through identification with his lost friend, describing the similarities that bound them together, particularly their love for what he calls queer art: "Art full of anguish and pleasure in the racked beauty of the world, the kind of alloy he loved, and understood: the sort of thing we make when we're true to the world's comminglings of gorgeousness and terror." Where his lover's heart flowed toward Wally, Doty the poet found another kind of home in his alliance with his fellow poet, Hull.

What evil design snatched them both away? Doty doesn't answer the question, sucked up in the following months by a kind of emotional meltdown: "Lynda died and whatever shine seemed to leak out of the other world as Wally entered it left me. . . . In another time I would have wandered in the desert, I would have torn my clothing and walked in rags, I'd have smeared my face with dust and clay and refused speech."

This last option unavailable, Doty finds himself in a not altogether dissimilar process, driven to the abode of a New Age-style healer by debilitating back pain. Stretched out on a massage table and covered in just a sheet, smeared with oil and relatively speechless, Doty succumbs finally to the wordless places of pain in his body: "The grief, the knowledge of grief, isn't in my head: the knowing is locked up in my thighs. What my body knows comes welling up, shaking me, deep quaking indrawn breaths and sobs . . . an interior geyser of such bitterness held at such depths it pours forth laying waste, burning everything in its path. How did I ever contain it?"

But once he has come through a few rounds of this kind of visceral release, finds that both his heart and spine are on the mend, the question of containment for Doty becomes again, as always: how to contain the experience within words? Because more than body work, more than support groups, more than the Unitarian Church, Doty believes in the Word—the Poetic Word. *Heaven's Coast* is a rendering of his gospel.

Not that they are merely words. As becomes abundantly clear through the book, metaphor for Doty is no idle aesthetic play but a way of life, a kind of living by faith that emerges as we read along on walk after walk with him along his beloved coastline, a landscape rich with symbols, signs, and sights transcendent. "The work of soul-making goes on, I think, as the world hammers us, as we forge ourselves in response to its heats and powers," he writes. By the end of *Heaven's Coast*, we believe him, seeing how Doty's response is to hammer back, welding image, metaphor, and meaning together out of all that gorgeousness and terror to create his own queer art of anguish and beauty.

— HILARY MULLINS

Hilary Mullins's novel, The Cat Came Back, received a Lambda Literary Award in 1993. She lives in Oakland and is currently at work on Ghosts and Saviors, a collection of short non-fiction.

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Poems Shaped in Passing

BY RICHARD MCCANN

When it was published in 1994, *Poets for Life: 76 Poets Respond to the AIDS Crisis*, edited by Michael Klein, received the Lambda Literary Award, and seized the attention of a broad community, equally for the passion of its cause and the authenticity of its voices. This spring Persea published *Things Shaped in Passing: More "Poets for Life": Writing from the AIDS Pandemic*, edited by Michael Klein and Richard McCann, with an introduction by McCann that appears here in a slightly revised version. The epigraph for this second anthology is borrowed from Rainer Marie Rilke, who wrote that the poet was a beginner compared to the sophisticated angel, and that the poet could do no better than "show him the simple thing that is shaped in passing." Those who have sat at the bedside while those they loved slipped away, into the other world, have experienced moments, heightened by brevity, where the most simple thing is a vehicle to remember the most precious. Three years later, Richard McCann names the shift, as a poet must.

What use was poetry, then, those nights, while he sat on the edge of the sofa, fingering the swollen lymph nodes in his neck?

"Don't do that," I told him. "It'll only make it worse."

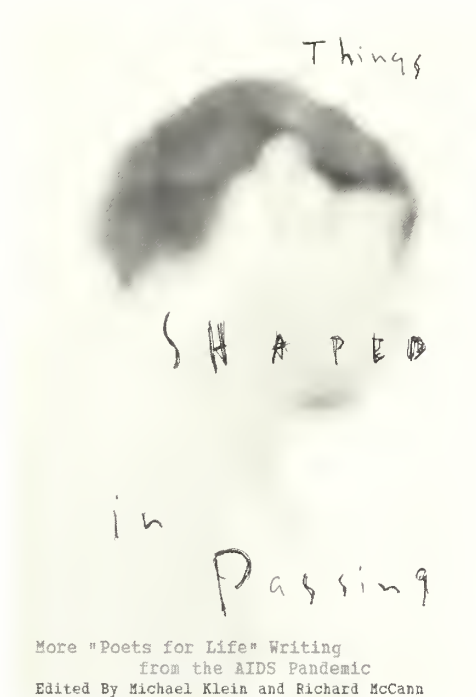
"It will?" he asked.

I didn't know what to say. He was my partner; he was Jaime. But still I could follow no thought that promised to lead only toward that which seemed unthinkable, as did so much in those days. For instance: Did the word "it" refer to his lymph glands, hardening beneath the soft tissue of his clean-shaven neck? Or did "it" refer to the fear I imagined him broaching each time he touched his glands obsessively, as if that fretful gesture might somehow release the word—the dreaded word, with its contagious replications—that Mark Doty describes in "Atlantis" as the "vacant / four-letter cipher / that draws meanings into itself"?

He touched his neck. I asked him, please, to stop.

To stop it. ("I was scared, but not for myself," says the speaker of Belle Waring's "So What Would You Have Done?" And then in the next line, her pained admission: "Of course, for myself.")

One was not yet thinking of Wilfred Owen, who wrote that other than "the monstrous anger of the guns" and the "stuttering rifles' rapid rattle," there would be no "passing-bells" for those "who die as cattle." One was not yet thinking of André Breton, who said that having passed through "the time of fire"—World War I, the Great War—one could never return to the painting of heiresses and teacups. One was not yet thinking of Anna Akhmatova, who waited "in line outside the prison in Leningrad" during "the terrible years of the Yezhov terror." For the most part, one was thinking only of what one's host



COVER DESIGN BY CARIN GOLDBERG

had said a few night before, at a dinner party: "I don't think we need to discuss *that* topic—not here, not in my house." And because one was trying to learn how to live, one wondered: Was he right or wrong to say this? Could he and he alone, perhaps, speak like this because, as he later reminded us, after all, he had been the first of us to lose a best friend to AIDS?

Who were we losing then, that night? Afterwards, Jaime sat on the sofa, and I sat beside him, listening to the sound of the air conditioner, with its persistent exhalation. It was barely audible until you listened to it, at which point it entered your head and got stuck there, loud and claustrophobic.

"You don't have AIDS," I told Jaime. "It's not as if you have AIDS. You have ARC."

But he had lost his heart for acronymic distinctions.

Here, in this photo, 1985, he is holding the Easter basket I have fashioned, with its "brave flourishes," its "bright and cheerful ribbons." I am standing behind him. Our household of voiceless objects, silences: a white card, noting his next appointment with the doctor, taped to the dresser's beveled mirror; his razor, lying by the sink.

It wasn't that one didn't love language.

One was always searching for a metaphor, although not the kind whose power derives from it having rendered itself as irreducible. One was searching for the kind of metaphor that might control, domesticate. One was always thinking: "waiting for the other shoe to drop."

"*Poets for Life* is, well, a bit *historical*," one poet said, when I phoned to tell her that Michael Klein and I were seeking submissions for a companion anthology that would deepen *Poets for Life* by presenting extended selections of work by American poets whose language, forms, and purposes have been shaped—and in some cases, in fact, created—by the ongoing experience of the AIDS pandemic, now almost entering its third decade.

This is what I told her. And she said, Yes, indeed, she had work to send.

But I was still thinking: *Historical? Historical?* The poems in *Poets for Life*—which Carole Muske described in her introduction as "the stunned words of the bloodied"—seemed hardly "historical," for many of them—such as Olga Broumas's "The Masseuse," Mark Doty's "Tiara," Marilyn Hacker's "Nights of 1965: The Old Reliable," Wayne Koestenbaum's "The Answer is in the Garden," Michael Lassell's "How to Watch Your Brother Die," and Jean Valentine's "X," among others, had entered that deep part of the self where the poem creates its own time, and where it begins to carve itself into us, even when it seems to be silent, for it rises again and again into consciousness, often as if unbidden.

But on the other hand: Well, yes, of course it was historical—what is not these days? Especially now, in these AIDS years, that is, when time—with its "breathing measuring sweating," as Donald W. Woods writes in his poem "Waiting"—has seemed at once so leaden and so fragmented. Is AIDS-time a viscous suspension? A conflagration? A mechanism of outlandish force, like Henry Adams's dynamo, at last accelerated to the shattering point, with its internal apparatuses now exposed? (Time, as Jaime experienced it: his blue-and-white plastic pill case, beeping in his jacket pocket; his broken travel clock, which ran too fast and couldn't be reset; his occasional, sudden astonishment that he was still alive. In the end, of course, he was "timeless.") How antique and homely seem the old words!—GRID; "exposed to the AIDS-virus," or HTLV-III; "co-factors, such as amyl nitrate, or 'poppers';" "five to 10 percent of those infected will develop AIDS;" the "miracle cure" of AL-721, an egg lipid, spread on toast. How antique and homely, already tinged with sepia, like one's youth . . .

Especially now, that is, when so many have already died.

If one looks at *Poets for Life* as an artifact, a cultural product, created and produced during and against the silences of the Reagan and Bush administrations, and published in 1989—it seems a text equivalent of a benefit performance, with its benedictory preface by the Rt. Rev. Paul Moore, Jr., Bishop of New York ("I have felt moments of grandeur and glory."); its emotional

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and crisis-driven foreword by public theater producer Joseph Papp ("The ache in my heart is spreading to my chest."); and, above all, its vast and often star-studded cast, many of whose poems are either elegiac or occasional. Moreover, if one considers the book's title as embedded in historical time, one sees how it seems to repudiate—whether by design or accident—the facile linguistic victory of those who claim to be "pro-life," and how, at the same time, it aligns the poems with ACT-UP buttons—SILENCE=DEATH, and ACTION=LIFE—to which it adds a new, implied equation: POETRY=ACTION, at least of a kind, for although the poem may seldom possess explicit political power, it does possess the power, as Louise Glück has noted, "to restore avidity." In this same vein, if one considers the subtitle, one sees how it seems to suggest—perhaps unwittingly, with unnamed hope and fear—that AIDS is still situated elsewhere, at a slight remove, as something *other*, and as an entity *to* which one might somehow respond. Is it wrong to imagine the suggestion of a legal metaphor? To imagine that AIDS was on trial, perhaps, and shackled in the witness box, facing its angry respondents? One *had* hoped that AIDS would soon be finalized, like a divorce or an equity case.

What use was poetry then?—as the poem began to forge itself from silences; as it emerged not only in the midst of a viral epidemic but also in the midst of what medical ethicist Paula A. Treichler has termed an "epidemic of significations"; and as it became (as it first was) one's own angered and heart-broken response (if "response" was ever the right word, the word for which one seemed always to be searching) to what one had begun to experience not as AIDS but as "the AIDS crisis." *Crisis, crisis*: the word that echoed in my head day after day as I first read Paul Monette's poems that were to become *Love Alone: 18 Elegies for Rog*; those poems, with their "blood-cries," as Monette called them, and their long chaotic lines insisting themselves into "a howl that never ends." *Crisis*: the word that scared and soothed me, in equal but alternate measures, as if it were the flip side of how I felt myself both terrified and comforted by the isolation of the small Virginia town where Jaime and I then lived.

But in retrospect—looking back at all that has been "shaped in passing," as it were, and looking forward toward that which may still come—one asks if one's sense of the AIDS crisis, at least as a linguistic construction, was not itself a metaphor, a metaphor necessary to one's own fears and hopes, in that the word "crisis" provided a narrative framework and thus promised the resolution of an experience so overwhelming as to have now shattered the narrative itself. Who now, for instance, could bear the final, beautiful scene of Craig Lucas's *Longtime Companion*, in which the survivors imagine that AIDS is cured and their dead are restored? If our dead were to return to us—in a long procession, say, beneath a silken banner—would they find us marred and hardened from all we have felt and seen in the terrible years since they died? And what would

one say to the loved one?—*You did not grow old, as I did. You did not age in my heart, Jaime, as I once hoped you would.*

Certainly the crises continue, day after day, even if their public language is wearied, like the flat phrases that occupy an obituary page, or if their representatives are no longer invited—as they once were, although briefly and then usually as ghouls or pitiable spectacles—on “Geraldo” or “Montel.” The crises continue, as they do in Joan Larkin’s poem “Inventory,” in which the speaker lists her many dead friends, one after another, in a series of interrupted images, but in which she can not reckon a final accounting, because the whole is not greater than the sum of its parts, and because, more importantly, neither the poem nor the deaths have reached their closures. But who has the heart to live in crisis when crisis drags on and on, as if ceaselessly, so that one might prefer to imagine that one is inured to it, just as one might prefer to imagine oneself inured even to hope? Who has the heart to imagine that AIDS is *only* a crisis, that is, when the crisis has lasted so long as to have become an *event*—an event proportional, as psychotherapist Walt Odets writes in *The Shadow of the Epidemic*, to “the two World Wars and the Great Depression as a psychosocial event of 20th-century world history.”

This is the AIDS that appears most often in *Things Shaped in Passing*—not only the AIDS crisis, to which one might respond, but also, and more importantly, the ongoing AIDS pandemic, from which one writes and in which the poem becomes not a response but (to borrow some lines from Wallace Stevens) “the cry of its occasion, / Part of the *res* itself and not about it.” This shift in prepositions—not “to” but “from,” a shift suggested by the poems themselves—is more than merely grammatical, for the shift in prepositions indicates an ontological shift in one’s relation to one’s subject, a shift in which the poet serves not as what Terrence Des Pres has called “an *outside* observer distressed by human events” but as an “*inside* participant.” (The conflict between these roles creates both the voice and tone of a number of these poems, such as Rafael Campo’s “Aida,” Christopher Davis’s “Duende,” Beatrix Gates’s “Homeless,” Marilyn Hacker’s “Wednesday ID Clinic,” and Belle Waring’s “Baby Random.”)

As Mark Doty has said of his own work, in a interview with Michael Klein in *Provincetown Arts* in 1994, AIDS has shifted from “*being* a subject,” something “apprehended in the distance” and has now become, “the dye in which the poem is steeped.” Indeed, through the long and ongoing experience of what Doty has called its “corrosive and transforming presence,” AIDS has become a critical part of one’s “subjectivity,” a “great intensifier” that makes everything the epidemic touches “more itself” and that necessitates it be seen not only as personal experience but also an agent (“a solvent,” says Doty) that alters the world and one’s most basic relations to it. Certainly the “great intensifier” is repeatedly evidenced in the prose statements we requested from the 42 poets included in *Things*

Shaped in Passing, and which we published so that the poets might assess the impact of the AIDS pandemic upon their imaginations: AIDS often appears as a ceaseless “loss of context” (Michelle Cliff) in which “only the present [is] stable” (Tom Andrews), as well as an “apocalypse” (Belle Waring) that has “changed unalterably” not only “our perspectives on survival” (Marilyn Hacker) but which has in fact changed “everything” (Joan Larkin).

But more important to the purpose of this anthology, the “great intensifier” is evidenced also within the poems themselves, in which AIDS often serves as the medium through which the world is felt and seen and named. In Marilyn Hacker’s “Against Elegies,” AIDS and cancer are perceived together not simply as medical phenomena but as a part of the enormous violence of our century, with its mass deaths and genocides—whether, as the poem notes, in Soweto, El Salvador, Kurdistan, Armenia, Shatila, Baghdad, Hanoi, or Auschwitz—and which therefore “makes everyone living a survivor / who will, or won’t bear witness for the dead.” In Lynda Hull’s beautiful and feverish “Suite for Emily,” the speaker’s awareness of her friend Emily—her comrade through “a thousand ruined nights,” who is in prison, dying of AIDS, and whom the speaker now addresses, while thinking also of Emily Dickinson—focuses her fierce insistence on this world (with its “tossed gloves & glittering costumes,” “its dangerous cobalt luster”) as “the only world,” even if its mercies are obscured by its “carnivorous streets,” its “fabulous breakage” and its “ceaseless *perpetuum mobile*.”

In 1994, when Michael Klein and I began to gather these poems for what we then imagined as simply a second volume of *Poets for Life*, we were struck at once by how many of them—such as Tom Andrews’s “A Language of Hemophilia,” Tory Dent’s “Jade,” Tim Dlugos’s “G-9,” Mark Doty’s “Atlantis,” Beatrix Gates’s “Triptych,” Richard Howard’s “Man Who Beat Up Homosexuals Reported to Have AIDS Virus,” Lynda Hull’s “Suite for Emily,” Carl Phillips’s “In the Blood, Winnowing,” and Joel Zizik’s “Pneumocystis”—were far longer than most of the poems in the earlier anthology, the greater number of which were somewhat brief and lyrical. How much has AIDS absorbed into itself, as each day it grows larger?—certainly whole lives, at least, all with their own vast and complicated histories. As it challenges even its own numbed silence and denial, how does the poetic imagination sustain itself as it makes its difficult and sometimes even violent contact with what Wallace Stevens called “the press of the real”? Does it do so, perhaps, by creating its own necessarily hybridized literary tradition?—as does Marie Howe, who achieves an almost religious grace through her Akhmatovian allegiance to detailed sight and simple language; upon Emily Dickinson, with her fierce and intimate knowledge of death, as well as upon Hart Crane’s *The Bridge*, and most especially his poem “The Tunnel,” with its nightmare vision of urban America, as does Lynda Hull in “Suite for Emily”;

upon Constantine P. Cavafy, as does Mark Doty in *My Alexandria*, with its persistent griefs and acute desires; upon Gerard Manley Hopkins, as does Carl Phillips in “A Quiver of Arrows,” with its sprung rhythms and its complex syntactical inversions; or upon Frank O’Hara, as does Tim Dlugos in “G-9,” with its penchant for New York City gossip and its intelligent and ennobling humor. If these poems assemble a new literary tradition, they do so in part by forming what some might see as strange and even impossible imaginative alliances between a homosexual poetic tradition (exemplified by poets such as Whitman, Crane, and O’Hara) and a more expressly political poetic tradition (exemplified by poets such as Akhmatova, Hikmet, Seifert, and Milosz) and by creating the occasion and crossroads on which these poets meet.

These questions and issues, posed by the poems themselves, required that we see *Things Shaped in Passing* not only as a companion and sequel to *Poets for Life* but also as a new and separate volume. We wanted to present larger selections of poems by a lesser number of poets. We wanted the reader to undergo and thus to profit from the psychic immersion the poems require and that scholar Joseph Cady describes as “disruptive” and “destabilizing.” We sought to follow this principle, although we often enough allowed ourselves to break it if we felt that a single poem by an author was both greater and more important than our rule.

Some readers will find, of course, omissions. In the end we were able to make available only one-half of the extraordinary material we gathered. Often we were astonished to locate multiple perspectives: of those who have contended or now contend with HIV infection, as in Tory Dent’s “Jade,” Melvin Dixon’s “Wednesday Mourning,” Tim Dlugos’s “G-9,” David Matias’s “Some Things Shouldn’t Be Written,” Paul Monette’s “Manifesto,” and Donald W. Woods’ “Waiting”; the perspectives of family members and lovers, as in Marie Howe’s “How Some of It Happened,” Belle Waring’s “For My Third Cousin John Ray,” Richard Tayson’s “In Sickness and In Health,” and Joel Zizik’s “Pneumocystis”; the perspectives of those who sought a “drug’s good sweep like nothing else,” as in Lynda Hull’s “Suite for Emily”; the perspectives of dear friends and engaged witnesses, as in Cyrus Cassells’s “Love Song With the Wind of Calvary” and Donna Masini’s “Beauty”; the perspective of the hemophiliac investigating the etymology and meaning of his condition, as in Tom Andrews’ “The Language of Hemophilia”; and the perspectives of those who are both poets and health care workers, whether as physicians, as in Rafael Campo’s “The Distant Moon” and “Age 5 Born with AIDS,” or as nurses, as in Belle Waring’s “Baby Random” and Mary Jane Nealon’s “Watching the Solar Eclipse with AIDS Patients in Infectious Disease Clinic, May 10, 1994,” or as volunteer “buddies,” as in Maggie Valentine’s “William’s Tale: The King of AIDS.”

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What use was poetry, then, those last nights, while I sat in the hospital beside Jaime, who slept beneath the harsh fluorescent lights that hung above his bed? He had been hospitalized for ascites and liver failure; then he suffered a series of brain seizures and then a stroke.

"Look at me," he said one night. Did he imagine that no one could see him? He had been sick a long time. He was often angry, so there were few people left to witness his life. His skin had become so fragile it blistered and bled if one touched it. He weighed 100 pounds.

Three nights before he died, his sister flew in from the southwestern city where she lived. It wasn't that she was afraid to come, she explained, though she said she could never agree with her brother's lifestyle. One had to understand that she had wanted to come much earlier, although one had also to understand that she was the person on whom her family depended and who was therefore overtaxed with duties and obligations.

Of course, I thought. She had not once visited, although in retrospect I see that Jaime had kept his life from her at least as much as she had kept herself from it.

We stood on opposite sides of his bed. He was only sometimes conscious. "Jaime," she said. "I'm here. I'm here."

I studied her left eye, which contained a small burst vessel of blood—a hematoma from the airliner's cabin pressure, she said, though it looked like a small red planet consumed by a vivid flame.

Well, I thought, *it serves you right. Your eye has burst with blood because at last it sees what you refused to look upon.* What use was poetry? Her blood-stained eye was poetry, if poetry were justice.

As it is not, I suspect, unless it is through the justice of its attentive witness, a witness I could not that night provide for her in my anger and my fear. "How much can the eye take in?" asks Donna Masini in her poem "Beauty"; "I think it must be the organ of feeling."

I would situate many of these poems within the context of the "poetry of witness," described by Carolyn Forché in her introduction to *Against Forgetting*, where the poem bears "the impress of extremity," and locates its voice between the realm of "the state and the supposedly safe havens of the personal." Such a poem provides "evidence of what occurred," she writes, but because what occurred now occurs in language, it is also "as much 'about' language as are poems that have no other subject other than language itself." The poem is therefore more than the "trace of an event," says Forché; it is also "itself an event"—a "trauma" that one enters through words, "voluntarily," and that "changes both a common language and an individual psyche."

The poem of witness might serve, not only as a document, but as lyrical expression and protest. Calvin Bedient noted, "The lyric can be coarsened and broadened to include the facts." In Paul Monette's "Here," the elegiac impulse—often regarded as quite "personal" perhaps because of the "overheard" and often epistolary

nature of its address—serves not only as a protest against a lover's individual death ("the only green / is up by the grave") but also as the foundation for what will become a series of enraged protests, as in his poem "Manifesto," against the social and political forces complicit in the deaths of gay men with AIDS: "the Feds are lying / about the numbers the money goes for toilet / seats in bombers the State of the Union / is pious as Pius washing his hands of Hitler / Jews are not a Catholic charity when is / enough enough." In Marvin K. White's monologic "Last Rights," an angered queen makes comic but defiant protest of the rites of a ex-lover's funeral by claiming his "rightful place" among the family that would deny him any rights at all. In Tory Dent's often surreal and fabulistic "Jade"—a poem of massive ambition, with its extravagant and overheated language "almost passing into chaos," as Whitman once said of his own work—the HIV-positive speaker refutes the ways in which she is perceived (as "contaminated," as "a photograph of a dead tree," as "a skeletal bride draped in desecrated chiffon") and uses anger as a force through which she can challenge the structure of stigmatization: "Who sent the yellow star swimming in my veins? / Who plucked it out like an eye and painted it so painfully yellow to begin with? // Who stigmatized the pigmentation of my skin? / Who soaked me in blackness, rain of red and yellow, every inch?"

For Tory Dent, language itself—often stretched to its tearing, and bloated with a strange and new beauty—is a site of resistance, although it is more that, for language is the means of the imagination's engagement with Wallace Stevens's "pressure of the real"—whether through the sensual, gorgeous, and ultimately transcendent language of Mark Doty's "Atlantis"; the regular meter of Thom Gunn's "Lament"; the anguished but quiet lullaby of Cyrus Cassells's "Love Song With the Wind of Calvary"; the living heart rhythms and "fundamental beating" of Rafael Campo's "El Dia de los Muertos"; or the unsentimental and almost brutal diction of Richard Tayson's "The Test." In this sense, the poem is not only "about" the world; it is, as Terrence Des Pres notes in an essay on Stevens, the site on which "imagination and reality meet as equals, and the former draws its character and strength from the latter. Thus, writes Des Pres, "art sustains itself *in* the world, surviving rushes of negative force that to innocent eyes might seem overwhelming."

What I have written here constitutes only "some remarks"—remarks that by their nature must carry less than the poems, which bear what Freud would call the "primary process."

What use was poetry? As for me: I worked on this book the last year of Jaime's life. Often I read the poems in his hospital room, while he slept. I read them in the evening, as I sat on the stoop beneath the porch light, petting his dog—*That's a good boy, good boy.* I often read them late into the night. The last week that Jaime lived,

I read them in the afternoon when I'd retreat from his hospital room to the local swimming pool, where I'd lie on a plasticized chaise lounge, listening to Annie Lennox on the Walkman: *No more I love you's. Language is leaving me . . .*

What use was poetry?

It restored me to language. It was equal to life.

The poem stood—with what Stevens called “nobility.” (Stevens, of whom Des Pres wrote: “The real nobility, for this poet, is that despite the stain of pushing back he stays so poised.” Words that might have also been said of Tim Dlugos.)

From Lynda Hull, this prayer: “Let her be / the foam driven before the wind over the lakes, / over the seas, the powdery glow floating / the street with evening—saffron, rose, sienna / bricks, matte gold.” From Jean Valentine: “the ghost letter.” From Cyrus Cassells, a phrase, now committed to memory: “Armorless, open / To the imperiled.”

Sometimes as I read these poems I felt I was an amnesiac returning to his memory. Sometimes I wanted to write down all that Jaime had said, even in what had seemed a time of muteness: the shrill rages; the murmured confidences; the ordinary morning greetings; the denials and hopes and angered disappointments; the whispers, still traveling through their catacombs of tenderness and mercy.

Richard McCann is the author of a collection of poems, Ghost Lettes (ALICE JAMES BOOKS). He co-directs the graduate program in creative writing at American University and serves on the Writing Committee of the Fine Arts Work Center.

Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation

by Urvashi Vaid

Anchor Books / Doubleday

Simply put, “virtual equality” for gay and lesbian people is the appearance of equality without the reality. Urvashi Vaid diagnoses it as the state we are in. How we came to this point, and what we can do about it, is the substance of her book. She ought to know: Vaid has long been among our most valuable activists.

Since the formation of the activist groups Mattachine and Daughters of Bilitis at mid-century, and despite the acceleration of the gay and lesbian movement after Stonewall in 1969, we have not yet achieved full equality with heterosexuals in American society. The cacophony of the gay and lesbian movement has contributed to its ineffectiveness. Gay and lesbian people come in all sizes, colors, shapes, and political persuasions; the only thing we hold in common is sexual preference. Even that has very different meanings for different people and the result is that we never seem able to move in a unified way. Instead, our movement is fragmented, rife with dissension, and internal ha-

tred. On top of that, since 1981 we have had to fight AIDS.

The eternal enemies are that quartet: sexism, racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia, all exacerbated in recent years as the religious Right ascended to political power. Urvashi Vaid's project in this book is to suggest what we must do to survive into the 21st century. It is a daunting task.

She begins by giving us our own history. As one who has read most of the major texts, and lived through much of this history myself, I was surprised at how much I learned. Vaid synthesizes the arguments of major activists—from Harry Hay in the '40s to Larry Kramer and others now—and analyzes, in cogent, shrewd, and insightful ways, the problems facing us in each decade from the '40s to the present. But this is no academic history. She writes clear, forthright prose with a sense of urgency, as someone who knows in her bones that lessons of the past can ensure our survival as a people.

And Vaid is honest. She acknowledges mistakes, such as the 1993 debacle, when too many gay leaders were “asleep at the switch,” regarding gays in the military, leaving gays worse off than they were before, and causing a loss of momentum in the movement generally. Generously, she takes errors like these as opportunities for self-criticism. She also analyzes larger problems within the movement, such as the debilitating effects of the closet, of horizontal hostility, and our refusal to grapple fully with continuing sexism, racism, anti-Semitism and internalized homophobia within our own ranks.

Her overall argument is more or less a straightforward, nearly faultless critique of the “mainstreaming” of gay and lesbian life. While mainstreaming—a place at the table—is what many gay and lesbian people appear to want, Vaid sees danger in accepting it without questions. Mainstreaming, she says, is what has led us to the current impasse she calls “virtual equality.” The notion that we are “just like” heterosexuals in all but the form of our sexual activity is a double-edged sword, she argues, and is ultimately dangerous. It has led to a rights-based strategy in which we pursue civil rights through anti-discrimination legislation to the exclusion of more liberating notions, like changing the nature itself of marriage and the family. It is not that we should not have basic equality and civil rights under the law, she argues. Of course we should. But underlying homophobia means that we can be granted all the civil rights in the world, and still be second-class persons in our own country. Instead of assimilating to the dominant heterosexual culture, she argues, we must bring the culture to us.

Marriage is a case in point. Although a fairly inchoate issue at the time the book was written, and thus not discussed at length, it has since developed as the major issue *du jour*. “Mad vow disease” has certainly taken hold among lesbians where I live in Northampton. Mainstreamers argue that prevention of gay marriage cements our status as less-than; and that we should be able to marry and receive the recognition of the



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— PHILIP HAMBURGER, THE NEW YORKER, SEPT. 9, 1996



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state of our unions, just like heterosexuals. But mainstream marriage becomes problematic as soon as we come, heaven forbid, to divorce. Do we really want homophobic judges deciding our futures? On what terms will they act? It seems likely that most would extrapolate from what they know of *heterosexual* life, and decide issues on those terms. Will they insist on butch and femme, for example, as the closest equivalent of male and female roles? Adultery, for another example, is often seen very differently by gay male couples than by your average heterosexual couple. It can be seen immediately that we don't fit very well into heterosexual categories. Granting us marriage, then, would once again give the appearance of equality without the fact.

Vaid argues that of course we should have the right to marriage, together with every other right granted heterosexuals. But her stance implies that marriage by itself, without further essential changes—the eradication of homophobia among them—would result in less advance than we might imagine. For this reason, she argues, we must take a liberatory position from the beginning. That is, we must state that we are *different* from heterosexuals, that we are "dissenters" from the heterosexual norm, that we are not and never will be "just like" them. We must insist *both* on having our rights, and remaining the complex, different people we are.

Furthermore, this means we must speak forthrightly and directly, to ourselves and to heterosexuals, about who we are, what we need, and what we want. Coming out of the closet is only the first—but most essential—prerequisite. It also means speaking about the nature of our sexual desire, and what we do and won't do, and why. It means speaking about our relationships, what they are like, what they mean to us. It means coming out of the bar, the ghetto, and the private enclave. It means expanding the culture we have been highly successful at creating into the dominant culture. It means organizing, on a long-term basis, for political power.

We don't do these things. Whether because of fear or anger or hurt, we tend to settle for the little we have, for "us" and "them." Many gay people, brought up with an "outlaw" mentality, tend to revel in it—which also means we settle for it. Vaid urges us to see ourselves as a minority people who have valuable things to teach others about respect, difference, joy, play, pleasure, and pain. She urges us to act rather than be acted upon. She sees that the only true equality is the one that both knows and respects who we are.

This is how she puts it, toward the end of her book:

Rather than asking how gay and lesbian people can integrate themselves into the dominant culture, what if, instead, we affirm that our mission is explicitly to assimilate the dominant culture to us? To phrase the question that way suggests at once a pragmatic and transformational mission for our movement. . . . Defining our movement's goal as the assimilation of heterosexual families, employers, neighbors, and institutions to the nor-

malcy of gay and lesbian people, we clarify the educational work we need to do. Immediately, what we must do extends beyond the law, into the principle sites of daily life: family, work, community, even faith. Instead of arguing about who becomes assimilated and who is left behind, we can discuss how to communicate who we are to the government, family, the communities in which we live. We must attempt to transform rather than reform, apply healing rather than Band-Aids. This in the end is what I mean by a gay and lesbian liberation-based practice. Such a practice has social transformation as its goal and community organizing as its method.

As an example of how this might work in real life, she uses the problem of antigay violence:

What if our work were defined not as getting for gay people that which other minority groups have won, but as dealing with the violence that threatens all of us? What if we allied in our neighborhoods with all others who fear violence to understand the construction of violent people, and to expose the conditions like alcoholism, drug addiction, insecurity, and economic anxiety that contribute to violence? What if we all worked together to develop neighborhood-based education, organizing, and intervention strategies? It is possible to contemplate such a strategy today, because the basic apparatus for it exists.

A Utopian vision? To be sure. But we should not concede its loss before we begin. *Virtual Equality* is at its core a deeply democratic, deeply moral, and optimistic book, one that can help show us the way toward true equality. It's a book every gay person should read and take to heart and to action.

In a book packed with shrewd observations, perhaps Vaid's most important insight is that we are deeply moral. This may at first seem surprising to those of us, like me, who live determinedly secular lives; and to others, like certain gay men, who have built an identity on an ethic of sexual liberation. Also, because "morality" has been purloined and taken over as the almost exclusive province of the religious Right, many of us have become alienated from the very idea. But gay culture has always been built on love, on individually chosen (not given) relationships, and on networks that radiate from there. How we handle these relationships, not only in the era of the disintegrating heterosexual family but also in the era of AIDS, is a shining example to others of which we can be proud. Just as, in the past, we rejected medical models of ourselves as "pathological" and legal ones as "criminal," we must now reject all characterizations of ourselves as "immoral." We need to put right beside any such characterization our own clearly defined, different version of morality.

Vaid's most important observation is that the Right is, at its core, a totalitarian project. This is a grave warning each of us needs to act on, fast.

A most saddening fact, given by Vaid, is that national gay organizations did not begin to organize specifically against the Right until 1993, 13 years after Reagan came to power. The Right already has control of the Congress and half of the judiciary, so it is well on the way to achieving state power. Its aim is a neo-fascist, theocratic state, deadly to any gay and lesbian movement and every individual gay person. Vaid recommends that we organize just as the Right did, from the grassroots up, beginning with every local precinct, county, and state. There is no substitute for votes, and we are nowhere near creating an effective voting bloc of gay and lesbian people. When gay leaders can speak up against atrocities like the so-called "Defense of Marriage" Act, or "don't ask, don't tell" perversions, knowing that millions of calls and post-cards are coming in from the gay community, backed up by votes, then we will have the kind of clout the Right does. When we have enough votes, we can control the agenda, and it is even possible to do so as a minority. It is an axiom in politics that a small, committed group will always win out over a large, amorphous, and uncommitted group. Some analyses of the 1994 elections, in fact—the stuff of which Newt's disastrous revolution was made—hold that those Congressional elections were swayed by a grand total of about 8,000 votes. We too can tilt the scale, but we must act, together, and stop falling apart at every easy opportunity.

Vaid's book is vastly different from Andrew Sullivan's *Virtually Normal*, Bruce Bawer's *A Place at the Table*, and Gabriel Rotello's more recent *Sexual Ecology*, all far more conservative in both conception and intent. As a brown woman, Vaid naturally addresses the movement as a whole, whereas these white gay men tend to address other white gay men. Both Sullivan and Bawer are rigorously assimilationist, arguing that the watchwords of gay men ought to be "maturity, decency, and responsibility," and that these, once achieved, will cross us over. Bawer's mantra forgets that generations of African-American people were mature, decent, and responsible. It took an organized political movement, and lives on the line, to gain right. We might remember that the nature of power is such that it doesn't move over without being shoved.

It is not clear that Vaid's wish for the development of a grassroots movement on a large scale can be achieved, but it seems to me her book, which is so politically astute and clearly argued, provides a remarkable blueprint. Hers is a convincing argument for the need. Whether we have the heart and the will remains to be seen. But get her book, read it, give it serious thought. It is the one gay book that everyone should read. Particularly if you lack passion in your life, read Vaid's book. It has passion in abundance. It's the kind of book that changes you, the best kind.

—ADRIAN OKTENBERG

Adrian Oktenberg is the author of The Bosnia Elegies (PARIS PRESS), a collection of poems. She lives in western Massachusetts.

Hospital Time

by Amy Hoffman

Duke University Press

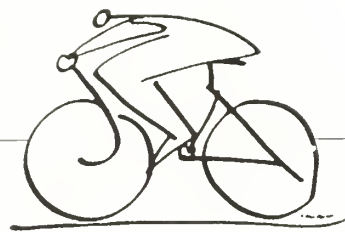
Hospital Time joins Paul Monette's *Borrowed Time* and Mark Doty's *Heaven's Coast* as the most authentic portrayals of death to AIDS. In the midst of the epidemic, there is comfort and knowledge to be gained from reading these books. They let us know, in the middle of the night while our lovers or our friends are bent over, shaking, clutching, that we are not alone.

Mike Riegle, according to Amy Hoffman, was a smart, one-of-a-kind, and difficult man. He died a mean death to AIDS. Hoffman was there for every bit of it and has written a blunt memoir of their experience together. Her book begins with an important confession: she does not think of her friend, and claims she does not miss him. She's wrong and knows it. People don't write books about people they don't miss.

We readers are lucky that she had such a complicated friend who lived with the rawness and indignity of bodily devastation. Riegle, as portrayed by Hoffman, wasn't particularly graceful about his death. It's not grace which Hoffman seeks.

We learn a great deal about Mike Riegle, right down to the shape of his penis when hard (second-hand knowledge for Hoffman). Riegle lived next to, but not within, late 20th-century American society. He did not want to fit. A gay man who loved outdoor sex, he cruised Boston's 24-hour pickup area in the Fenway. He took filthy men in off the street and tried, in his own misguided fashions, to take care of them. He worked in the gay liberation actions of the late '70s and '80s. He organized volunteers to write letters and send legal and gay community information to men and women in prison, personally befriending hundreds of these prisoners. Not believing in the capitalist system, yet dependent upon it, he went to the market to go "shoplifting" which at times resulted in him being banned from his local market. Toward the end of his life, friends had to schlep him to non-neighborhood markets, forced to assume the burden for his acting on his belief. Also, as much as he didn't believe in spending his own scarce money on food, he was quite happy to be invited elsewhere to dinner. He clung to ancient clothes, "rags" as Hoffman calls them, and rarely did laundry. Nor did he like to bathe. "Michael often smelled," Hoffman reports, "and I, bourgeois that I am, never liked to touch him."

Mike Riegle, for all his outsidership, had tremendous personal power. Many people travelled behind a slovenly and often uncompromising exterior to the man within. Few knew of his doctorate in the psychology of language, his fluency in Italian and French, familiarity with Russian, Spanish, Greek, and American Sign Language, and his love for children. Amy Hoffman had, please forgive the expression, her own crosses to bear. She and Riegle met when both worked at *Gay Community News*, she as manag-



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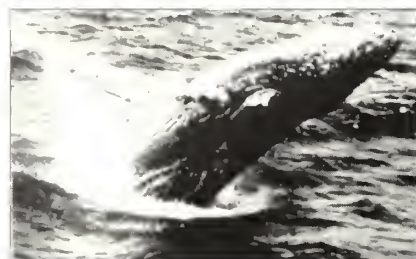
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ing editor, he as office manager. They developed an odd and close relationship. They understood they belonged in each others' lives, needed each other to balance the other, and didn't need to talk about it.

Hoffman begins with the observation: "I hated myself during the era of Michael's sickness." She hated herself for her central role in his illness, her resentments of his illness, and her jealousy of other friends involved. She hung in. One night, when Riegler struggled to breathe on a respirator, he insisted that Hoffman get into the Intensive Care Unit hospital bed with him. (This message conveyed via the "Respiratory Crisis Communication Aid Device"—a clipboard! This is also a very funny book.) Hoffman "had set my limit at this, but we're way past the world of reasonable limits now." She describes a night at Riegler's apartment when he could no longer stay alone. She and other friends were taking turns. Hoffman didn't want to be there, but was there, of course. "Diarrhea kept him up all night." Hoffman spent the night "cleaning off his bum when he didn't make it, mopping shit off the floor." He would sleep briefly until the next bout, and Hoffman would find him in the "bedroom doorway, moaning, shit spewing from his behind as from a monster in a Boschian Hell." Toward morning he told her it was the best night he'd had in months, explaining that of his over-night caretakers, only Hoffman woke with him, helped him clean up.

Hoffman weaves her own life into her time with Riegler. People forget that life continues. She talks about conversations with her lover, Roberta, who appears far less conflicted about Riegler. When Riegler was scheduled to come visit their Provincetown summer rental, Roberta asks, "Will he use the shower when he's up there?" answering herself, "I doubt it." The devastation in Provincetown is real, stark against the beauty. In a few crucial pages Hoffman presents a severely disabled woman, a lesbian named Carrie, who describes almost dying in a rare report of what it's like to watch yourself die.

Hoffman confesses her discomfort about her position in Riegler's life and death. "Why did I do it? Why did I try too hard to care for him? I don't know. How could I? I was trying to do good. But acts that appear benign may spring from malicious motives and have ravaging effects. Or, on the other hand, not." She knows, though, that she helped him, that things were "easier" because she was there. The conundrum of illness is that you're there, you don't want to be, you can't leave.

Riegler's anger is vivid. One night in the hospital, he ripped out his IVs, bit the nurse, threatened to kill himself, and finally gave in to his loss of privacy, dignity, and life. Hoffman urged him to calm down; later she realized: "Mike was right. Do not go gentle! I understand this now. He wasn't getting better. He was getting worse, no matter what they did, and he would get worse until worse was no longer possible." We feel her anger at Riegler for putting her through all this, forcing her to make decisions she did not want

to make, forcing her to witness things she did not want to see.

Late in his illness, the independent Riegler tries to fly to Texas to visit an old friend. He makes it as far as Memphis, where he collapses in the airport. Hoffman rushes to his side. Later she remarks that the only time she could find inner peace was when she was next to Riegler.

—JASON SCHNEIDER

Jason Schneider, a poet and freelance writer, lives in Provincetown with his life-partner Scott, their dog Sequoia, and their cat Moo.

Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography

by Gail Levin

Knopf

Jo & Ed

Hopper's last oil—
A marriage bio—
Turned the spot
On him and Jo
In one image:

"Two Comedians"
(Pierrot & Columbine)
Holding hands & bowing,
Sharing the limelight
And final applause.

But Ed shoved Jo
Into the wings
Whenever he could,
And she kept trying
To upstage him:

"Why fuss so over Ed?
I am just as good as he,"
She told a dealer
Two years before Ed's death,
When he was in Art's pantheon.

Not "Two Comedians,"
An ego-absolving gloss,
But Grant Wood's "American Gothic,"
Although generic,
Conveys their quintessence:

Lover-enemies.
He comes first as usual, jaw set,
Rigid pitchfork in fist;
She's close behind, in Reform collar,
Prim, fuming, mortified.

—MICHAEL A. SPERBER, M.D.

Michael A. Sperber, M.D., is a psychiatrist from Cambridge who sojourns on the Provincelands dunes, where he meditates on the relation of art and psychology. His most recent essay, "Variations on a Theme of Shame: Chekhov, Glenn Gould, and the 'Cased-in-Man' Syndrome," is forthcoming in the Psychoanalytic Review.

Body, Remember

Dutton

Anesthesia

Advocado Press

by Kenny Fries

Years ago, I tacked two lines from James Baldwin's *Another Country* to my bulletin board. I often return to them for guidance, particularly in facing the challenges—as well as the joys—of life with my own disabled lover: "You've got to be truthful about the life you have. Otherwise, there's no possibility of achieving the life you want."

Kenny Fries's two new books, a memoir and a poetry collection, strike me as attempts to do as Baldwin suggests. Fries weaves fluidly back and forth between many identities: as disabled, gay, Jewish, HIV-negative, and a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. At the same time he moves circuitously yet steadily toward "the life he wants." Fries' gift is to bring readers deeply into the painful yet sustaining world he inhabits. Ultimately his words expand, and render superfluous, the labels he has chosen and been given.

Born with severe, inexplicable congenital deformities of the lower extremities, Fries' early life was a blur of surgeries, casts, braces, and excruciating pain. He coped by becoming "superboy," learning to walk—according to his parents—while both his legs were in casts. He also announced his ambition to become a basketball player—to the applause and (clearly unrealistic) encouragement of his parents.

Now, 30 years later, Fries looks closely at what this survival strategy gave him, and what it cost. "Until I was in college I do not remember, not even once, talking with somebody about any difficulty that I was experiencing and could not handle alone," Fries recalls. Here, as throughout the memoir, his tone is even, neither pointing fingers nor wringing hands. As he details his experiences, emotional and physical, in a clear, unflinching manner, the enormity of the silence he has chosen to challenge emerges, as if in bas-relief.

Fries has structured his memoir as a pastiche of vignettes, many quite brief, which move the reader gracefully between present and past, and which allow him to approach the truths he must tell from a variety of angles. Here is his father, who gently bathed his legs and feet, yet also, in a moment of anger, deliberately burned Fries's arm with a hot fork. His mother, who sat "at my bedside every single hour of visiting hours every time I was in the hospital," remains curiously emotionally absent in his memory. In one telling scene from Fries's adulthood, when his parents come to help him move, his mother puts things away in a bottom drawer too low for him to bend to, while his father places things in high cupboards out of his reach. Even after so many years, Fries makes clear, his parents cannot—or will not—understand the limitations of their son's disability, yet he remains "their child in the

hospital . . . anxiously waiting for the next day when they will return." Both images, both sets of feelings are real, and Fries wisely names his task: "How to learn to hold on to the entirety of this cacophonous constellation—all at the same time."

An entire section of the book takes place in Israel, where Fries movingly renders his struggle to combine his Jewish, gay, and disabled identities, with the lives of the gay Israelis he comes to know. Fries takes often painful steps toward "the life he wants," including a positive love relationship. His first long-term lover calls him "three-toed bastard" during fights, the same name Fries's brother had called him. In a deeply revealing scene, Fries describes his one-time use of phone sex as a way to control "what a man knows about my body," and the excruciating event which led him to disavow such dishonesty in his sexual and romantic life. Shortly after this, Fries meets Kevin, his current lover, to who—along with Fries's parents—the book is dedicated. Images of their relationship provide a beautiful counterpoint to many painful stories relayed throughout this memoir, especially as Fries steadfastly addresses the challenge of their life together.

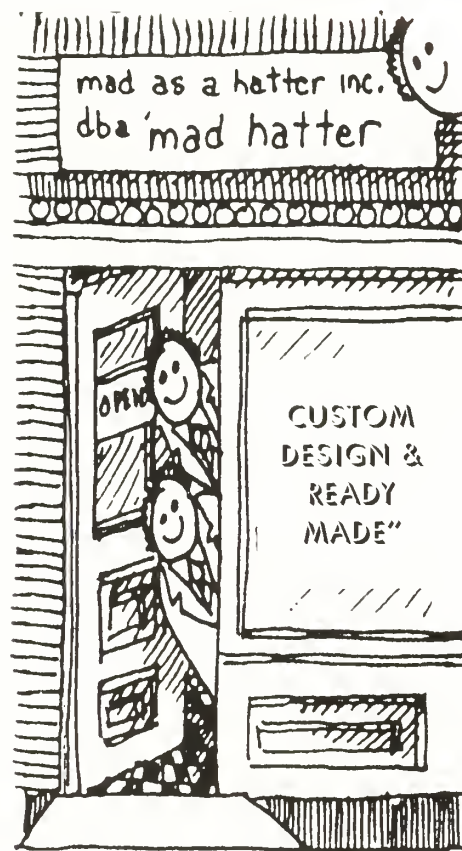
In *Anesthesia*, Fries condenses these themes into the urgent shorthand of poetry. He writes in the title poem: "You see, they have taken / my memory." Freed from the narrative requirements of memoir, Fries tears deeply into his own skin, and the question of what he calls "beauty"—who possesses it, what it means, what it offers to someone who must live within Fries' own "callused skin" and "twisted bones." More than once, admiring a lover's body—"solid" knees, unscarred skin—Fries speaks from a deep fury: "I want to break your bones. / Make them mine." How else, he asks, can he understand beauty's secrets? And, "If my skin won't heal, how / can I escape?" These poems are delicate, piercing, and precise as surgical tools.

Included in *Anesthesia* is "The Healing Notebooks," a powerful, 19-part sequence—previously published in chapbook form—about Fries's relationship with an HIV-positive lover.

Early in *Body, Remember*, Fries writes that in order to survive his childhood, he had once believed that "my deformed body and the pain it caused me were a sign from God that I was important . . . that my suffering had meaning not only for myself, but for the world." Although he implies that he no longer believes this, I would argue otherwise, in the sense that he has given meaning to his suffering for the world of his readers. These two books, read separately or together, embody a remarkable journey of truth-telling and transformation.

RUTH L. SCHWARTZ

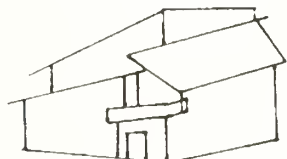
Ruth L. Schwartz is the author of the award-winning poetry collection, Accordion Breathing and Dancing. She lives in Oakland, CA, with her partner Gladys, to whom she donated a kidney in 1995.



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Imagination Verses

by Jennifer Moxley

Tender Buttons Press

It isn't often in this millennial time that one picks up a first book by a young poet and finds a collection of 42 poems, with a preface by the author, steeped in lyricism and brimming with iconic idylls, heavy-handed, capitalized categories such as Home, Heart, Beauty, and Knowledge, and lots of O!'s. Jennifer Moxley's *Imagination Verses* is such a book. While these "verses," a term that usually conjures works from another century, seem to present a bit of an anachronism, fitting somewhat more comfortably into a Romantic tradition than into a Modernist or even Postmodernist one, the author unequivocally informs us in her preface that they were written "out of a desire to engage the universal lyric 'I.'" She certainly realizes her agenda.

Imagination Verses proceeds as a truly total self, laid open to bare in all its myriad modes, wanderings, and tumultuous states. In keeping with the lyric tradition, the poems provide an arena in which this self may freely sing, and occasionally bellow. From love poems to incisive indictments, Moxley has every facet of a multifarious character covered, granting equal berth to the wile of wooing and the acridity of jilting. In each endeavor Moxley produces an alchemy of language that so enraptures the reader, we either feel that the poem must have been written directly to us, or else we wish it had been. Clever, concerted, more than a little coy, and ever right on target, Moxley's words hit the center of our understanding and gut emotion. In "The Waver in the Orbit of Uranus Becomes Unexplainable," she begins gently, even demurely:

I admit I've suffered from a "parallax of heart,"
born of a skewing jealousy and seen most
evenings
in field-weary gazing upon your sleeping
body.

From that angle all other worlds look bleak.

Then she zeroes in on the integrity of her position:

Though I will not call on heaven if you leave,
for I'm certain that the spirit is a one-eyed
pretender to the throne of pain-free living
who has stolen all my daydreams for a shot
at the beyond.

Then she recedes again, while enacting a synergistic correspondence between the poetic line and her established sentiment, a relationship which serves to underline the power of her lyrical language:

I suspect the water's edge is enamored of the
water,
a quiver on the surface tells me not the wind
but the wish to drift will devastate the sand.

Frank O'Hara said that "not the least function of poetry is to make vivid our sense of the meaning of words." Perhaps the most obvious success of Jennifer Moxley's poetry is this accomplishment, the making vivid of our sense of meaning through a stunning and luxurious precision in her selection of words, her evocation of mood, sentiment, and atmosphere, and her startling ability to illustrate experience. It is as if we were tasting something, seeing something, and feeling something, all at once, all in real time. These poems are tight, contained, and sharp without being stilted or covert. The idiomatic tendentiousness of Moxley's lexicon comes beautifully to life in "Helena & the Regional Boys," a poem whose cohesion and precision achieve a sort of perfection:

Like recognizable streets
those Boys keep right on
coming down my heart.
I'm a gun runner
for the United Girls of Camp &
I want those boys
like a western crescendo.

The sheer *smartness* of these poems is quite impressive.

For the most part, *Imagination Verses* does just what it sets out to do. The book is least successful, however, when its self becomes more indulgent than expressive, more vulgar than wooing. The closing line of "Neither Fish Nor Fowl," with its malicious and bitter tone, suggests a moping and wounded lover who has lost the sense of a better revenge: "...you the 'you don't know what she's been through,' / give me back my contentment and go crawl back up / whatever toxic riverbed had the misfortune to spawn you." Abandoning the sophisticated and refined tone of other poems, Moxley's language deteriorates here into wounded resentment.

Then also the occasionally overwrought insistence on the lyrical and somewhat archaic language of another era can make Moxley seem like a kind of new New Formalist, opting to contain her potentially excessive and emotive material within that which she can safely absorb. Her formalistic approach seems a bit defensive; rather than struggle though the problematic, she goes for the programmatic, couching her work in stylized language that is evocative and effectual, in essence a formal solution to a material problem. When Moxley asserts in her preface that "even the love poem agitates the beloved to fall in love with the poet," she neglects to consider that sometimes we, the readers, are agitated into other sentiments.

—ELIZABETH FODASKI

Elizabeth Fodaski is a poet living in New York.
She edits the journal *Torque*.



DEAN ALBARELLI, 1990 PHOTO SARA LONDON

Cheaters and Other Stories

by Dean Albarelli

St. Martin's Press

Dean Albarelli's first book, *Cheaters and Other Stories*, was published by St. Martin's Press last summer, and praised in *The New York Times Book Review* as a collection of "strong, cleverly constructed" stories with an "urgent sense of moral purpose." *Publishers Weekly* called it a book of "compelling and original tales," and *Library Journal* said "these works leave a permanent imprint on the reader." The nine tales include characters as wide-ranging as an I.R.A. terrorist with a new bride and a nagging conscience; a young Jewish woman living in denial of her ethnic identity while her twin brother embraces Orthodoxy; a private investigator who unexpectedly revisits his past during a troubling domestic case; and a divorced, drug-abusing journalist for whom revenge becomes the ultimate story. Albarelli's themes—guilt and responsibility, relations between the sexes, redemption in a world of compromise—are explored with compelling narrative momentum and a deft mastery of the short-story form.

Cheaters and Other Stories was completed during two fellowships at the Fine Arts Work Center, where Albarelli is now a member of the Writing Committee. He has lived in Provincetown for eight years, and worked as associate editor of this magazine from 1990-93. He spent his first two summers in Provincetown working as a commercial lobsterman. The recipient of a Michener Award and grants from the Vermont Arts Council and the Massachusetts Cultural Council, he was recently appointed an advisory editor of *The Hudson Review*, where several of

his stories have been published. For the last two years he taught in the MFA program at Emerson College in Boston, and he teaches a popular course in the Fine Arts Work Center's summer program. In 1997-98 he will be the Writer-in-Residence at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts.

CHRISTOPHER BUSA: I know you spent much of last fall on a book tour for your new collection, *Cheaters and Other Stories*. What was that experience like?

DEAN ALBARELLI: To tell you the truth, it began to feel a little bit like a political campaign. Not in a crass way, exactly, but...

CB: Well, you became something of a salesman—it's a good thing you believe in what you're offering!

DA: That helps. And I suppose there are worse places to hang out than the intersection of Commerce and Literature. I wouldn't want to log too much time there, though. Fortunately, not all of it was so commerce-oriented. Most of the stops were at bookstores, but I also visited several colleges and universities for readings and class visits. Those were among the best parts of the tour. I met a lot of bright, interested students—kids with a real passion for literature and learning.

CB: How did the tour readings differ from readings you've given in the past?

DA: Well, bookstores typically like to have a reading followed by a Q & A period, so there was more interaction with the audience than I'd experienced before. And I learned—or relearned—that people are especially curious about the extent to which one's fiction is autobiographical.

CB: Gossip is compost for the garden of literature. Your book talks about people who are trying to be faithful to some commitment, and often are failing or flawed in their effort. Are your stories autobiographical?

DA: There are certainly autobiographical elements throughout the book, but none of the stories themselves could be called autobiographical. Many of my protagonists have aspects of my own personality, or share my sensibility to some extent. And even occasionally share some of my experiences. But if all of these main characters were really me, I'd be a schizophrenic, for one thing. Or rather, I'd be a schizophrenic, for nine things. And I'd have lived a much more varied and exciting life than the one I know to be my own.

CB: I've known you for eight years now, and one of the things I've been greatly impressed by is your ability to write about subjects like adultery when you have such an obviously successful marriage.

DA: Well, as a writer and as a reader, I have to say that I'm not much interested in stories or novels about successful marriages running smoothly. Or about nice parents raising decent

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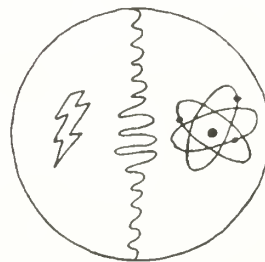
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DA: Without a hitch. I think that as readers, we approach fiction with an expectation of there being some feeling of urgency in the narrative, some degree of tension. Generally, that means something's not right in the world of the characters we're reading about. There's nothing really compelling or significant or redeeming about simply hearing the town crier call out, "11 o'clock and all's well!" I mean, sure, that's *part* of human experience, but I don't think it's the part we turn to literature for.

CB: One of the charms of your writing is your phrase-making, and your sense of voice in dealing with the particular characters you're creating. They have a very original, understated way of describing themselves and their situations. And there's a lot of humor and comedy, too, in this period of nihilism. Especially if you're a young writer, you're supposed to be nihilistic, but you are not.

DA: Well, thank you. *(Both laugh.)*

CB: You deal with nihilistic topics, though. One reviewer said that you write about weariness, but with tremendous energy. Do you remember that?

DA: Yes, Joan Wickersham in *Ploughshares*.

CB: I thought that was an interesting comment, because if you were to write wearily about weariness, it would be very tedious to us readers. Do you feel, perhaps, a sense of vindication at this point?

DA: Publishing the book was certainly a milestone. I don't feel as though this means I've "made it" now. But I think any writer sees the publication of his or her work in book form as constituting a sort of validation that's very welcome.

CB: Even though some of the stories might have been written eight or 10 years ago, when they're finally published, they suddenly become real. Is that the experience you've had with publication?

DA: To some extent. All of the stories in *Cheaters* had previously been published in magazines and anthologies. But having them collected for book publication and being able to reach a wider audience is important.

CB: It's altering.

DA: Yes. And it's something that the culture itself places a different value on. It positions the work in a more meaningful context.

CB: Your story "Flames" is partly about a Catholic priest who's attracted to a former girlfriend. It's narrated by his younger brother, a rock musician involved with a 16-year-old girl. At the same time that you're dealing with moral conflicts, you're also dealing with very comic material. Is that a conscious preoccupation?

DA: It's often a natural and largely subconscious inclination—a matter of personal sensibility—but with some stories more than others. It was an after-the-fact revelation for me when I first began writing fiction as an undergraduate—that there was often a comic dimension to the stories. Quiet, restrained comedy, anyway, not thigh-slapping, belly-laugh stuff. Anyway, to answer your question, I guess it's not uncommon for me to work very deliberately at fine-tuning the humor in a particular scene or passage of dialogue. But it's probably accurate to say that it's a more conscious preoccupation in revision than in original drafts.

CB: The long story "The Orthodox Brother," along with noteworthy comic elements, is a very serious story ultimately. And with Judaism figuring as a prominent theme, it seems to represent quite a leap for a Catholic writer.

DA: You're right, it was, although I guess I'd have to describe myself as a "lapsed Catholic." But "The Orthodox Brother" was easily the most challenging story I've written so far. It went through at least 25 or 30 revisions. The Jewish subject matter was part of the challenge, but it's also the only full-length story I've written with a woman protagonist. For a long time I also doubted my ability to convincingly set a story in New York City, even though I lived there for three years. The main problems, though, were getting the story properly focused and hitting the right tone. The first five or six drafts had Laura narrating the story in first-person—that's how far off I was to start with. And it took me at least that many versions before I even hit upon the idea of having her be a sort of "self-hating Jew."

CB: Another story of yours that's received a lot of attention is "Honeymoon." It's narrated by a young I.R.A. terrorist who finds, on the eve of his wedding, that he's uncertain about both his

political and romantic commitments. How did that story come about?

DA: I lived in Dublin, Ireland, for a year in my early 20s, and one of my neighbors was a librarian involved with the Provisional I.R.A. He had told me about a friend of his, another I.R.A. man, who had been asked by his handlers to smuggle into the country a small parcel of high-tech explosives. The guy was traveling with his girlfriend, and they rigged her up with a false front to make her look pregnant, then packed the explosives into her artificial womb. At the time it was just an anecdote that I didn't really dwell on, but I guess it touched my imagination, because that was the main germ behind "Honeymoon."

CB: And what are you working on right now?

DA: I've been writing a novel that I'm pretty excited about. Recently, though, *The Hudson Review* editors asked me to contribute a story for their 50th anniversary issue, so these last few weeks I've put the novel aside to try and complete what had been a half-finished story. (I should tell you, the story was inspired in part by your piece on crossdressers in the 1991 issue of *Provincetown Arts*). Definitely not a comic story. As much as I've been enjoying working on a broader canvas with the novel, I do love the short-story form, and it's been great to have an excuse to work on one again.

CB: Recently, your story "Winterlude" was adapted to film?

DA: Yes. A very talented young filmmaker from North Carolina, Carlton Prickett, did a 40-minute, black-and-white adaptation, starring Donal Logue and an actress named Galaxy Craze. The film was selected for last year's Hamptons Film Festival, and won first prize in the short film category.

CB: Is film where it's at for today's young writer?

DA: If there's film interest in this novel, I'd be delighted, but I'm not writing it with that in mind. My only priority is to make it the best novel I can possibly manage—by literary standards. Hollywood has to be incidental to that. But God knows it would be a welcome incidental.

Christopher Busa conducts a weekly radio program in Provincetown on WOMR, "ArtTalk," where this interview aired in April.



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Wise Poison

by David Rivard
Gray Wolf Press

We Have Gone to the Beach

by Cynthia Huntington
Alice James Books

Here are two books of poetry, each of which has been awarded a prize. Rivard's collection is winner of the 1996 James Laughlin Award of the Academy of American Poets, and Huntington's received the 1996 Beatrice Hawley Award. Aside from their laurels, the poets and the books have little in common.

Rivard, who teaches at Tufts University and in the MFA Program at Vermont College, asks the hard questions: Who are we? What do we love? What kind of times do we live in? What is American? One poem explores the difficult subject of Jonestown. Another looks unflinchingly at the ulceration that pits his father's thigh: "An amber circle rims / and measures the ulcer. / Bruise purple at the edge, / hub & cure gray / as axle grease, the skin / crusts with scabs."

But such specificity is rare in this book. These poems are primarily poetry of statement, with few imagistic or metaphoric pyrotechnics. Occasionally Rivard does make great leaps, as when drops of rain that run down a fire escape are called "the second cousins of history, as slyly incestuous as all second cousins." This line is not easily forgotten. At other times he achieves his effects through Whitmanesque cataloging. Speaking of kids who leave a movie house, he says:

One will head toward the meatpacking district, over the river.

One will make it only as far as the mountain meadow, the lupine.

One will climb the fence around a rocket launching pad.

One will sleep on grates, eloquent as an air brake.

That last line shows how deft Rivard can be. Elsewhere he writes tender lines about seeing John Logan after one of the fellow poet's strokes. Other poems invoke images and influences, among them the paintings of Max Beckmann and the jazz of Eric Dolphy.

But mostly the book asks questions. This one could act as an epigraph: "What have I seen, what have I seen / I have not let go of & only loved?"

Though she also teaches in the MFA Program at rural Vermont College, as well as at Dartmouth College, Cynthia Huntington's poems are most often urban and gritty. They convey the intense loneliness and detachment of the bleak townscapes of Edward Hopper, as in "Passing Through Hometown":

The discount drugstore, the last place,
is closing in ten minutes.

There's just me over here by the paperbacks,
and three teenage boys
analyzing rock magazines,
and the cashier getting ready to go home

Huntington does more with imagery than Rivard. Lawn sprinklers are "iron blossoms" which rise from the ground at dusk to spurt and shower, and the garbage truck is a "monster" which "comes at dawn to eat metal." Some of these poems are nostalgic, but never sappy. She's moved by things like a jukebox playing sexy music in the daytime, a reminder of one's old life, or by memories of the first taste of beer—"half-warm / from the can, sweet, skunky taste of it." Note how lean these lines are, and the unexpectedness of "skunky." She also has great empathy, as in "The Animal," a poem about a neglected pet put out on a balcony, tied up, and left. And she handles enjambment well: "You and I darling, here in the dark / rooms with the ghostly furniture." Her line-break gives us both the dark and the dark rooms. Donald Hall, writing in *The Boston Review*, has spoken of Huntington's "vocabulary of nice distinctions." That is just one pleasure of this rich collection.

—ROBERT PHILLIPS

Robert Phillips is author of five collections of poetry, most recently *Breakdown Lane* (JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS). He is Professor of English at the University of Houston.

Wet: On Painting, Feminism, and Art Culture

by Mira Schor
Duke University Press

I get a little wary when artists describe their work as "poetically intended." Meaning that it is unfinished, inconclusive, a springboard for viewer interpretation. While this is awfully generous, I always try to hold my own impressions at bay for a moment so that the artist's individual choices, aesthetic, being, might reach me with integrity intact.

Funny then that I just can't help but instantly absorb Mira Schor's *Wet: On Painting, Feminism, and Art Culture* as though it were a poem. From the moment I saw its cover—the "V" of half the "W" in "Wet" cradling a key detail from Schor's painting "Slit of Paint," (that detail being a thickly brushed vulval slit framing a semi-colon)—I've found myself drifting off into emotional reveries on what this book means to me, my friends, and to our past and future. Not a typical reaction to reading theory. Just carrying the book around in public, reading it on subways, in coffee shops, I'm constantly aware of my own hesitance or boldness, depending on whether I try to conceal its in-your-face cover. But because Schor is an artist, teacher, and critic, and not, to my knowledge, a poet, I'll restrain my personal musings for awhile and try to do justice to one very powerful, and fair-minded collection.



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Fausta Weingeist

In 20 essays divided into four primary sections—"Masculinity," "Femininity and Feminism," "Teaching," and "Painting"—Schor manages to mesh and unravel the prevailing issues of art and feminist history and theory arisen over the last decade with absolute authority. (Much of the writing was published first in *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*, a journal co-founded by Schor in 1986.) She studied art history as an undergraduate, and spent a year in the Feminist Art Program at CalArts, from which she received her M.F.A. in 1973. Beyond these academic influences, Schor lists the ingredients in her writings this way: "The recipe could read as follows: mix Hasidic Eastern European ancestors, European artist parents, a French education, New York School of painting family friends, add a splash of H.W. Janson, stir in a shot of Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, a cup of conceptual art, simmer, and, before serving, pepper with critical theory."

There are several kinds of artists who write. There are those, like Bruce Naumann and Jenny Holzer, who use words as elements in their art, like a brushstroke or a slab of steel. There is Robert Motherwell, who wrote brilliantly on abstract expressionism during its misunderstood infancy, and on many subjects throughout his life, yet who maintained, "I loathe the act of writing," and asserted that painting was his separate and vehemently preferred calling. And then there is Schor, who fuses the artist with her writing and the writer with her art. Two years ago she exhibited at Bangs Street Gallery in Provincetown a series of canvases with painted words threaded across the surface, entwining language and paint.

With so much experiential cushioning beneath her, Schor walks many lines securely—balancing formalism and feminism, theory and practice, public advocacy and private artistry—and finds ways to honor and integrate opposites, without ever getting wishy-washy. Take her argument in "Appropriated Sexuality" (1986), a full-steam bash of not just the misogyny in David Salle's paintings of faceless women penetrated by phallic forms, but also of (male) art critics' wholesale refusal to address the artist's dominant preoccupation. As Schor explains, Salle's work "is discussed in terms of art-historical references to chiaroscuro, Leonardo, modernism, postmodernism, poststructuralism, Goya and Jasper Johns, Derrida and Lacan—you name it, anything but the obvious." Schor delineates the reasons for this neglect, and, best of all, exposes the cowardice that makes people hide the truth. She lays out so considered an analysis of the motivations behind Salle's abusive images that by the end, her identifying Salle as "an impotent sadist" seems perfectly just. Name-calling may not be in all kindness, but it's convincingly in all fairness here.

While taking on heavy subjects like the "phallosensical homologue on Western civilization," Schor rarely weighs us down with excessive verbiage and often lifts us up with humor. In her essay "Representations of the Penis" (1988), a detailed enquiry into the painted and sculpted penis, Schor took on what strikes me

MIRA SCHOR



ON PAINTING, FEMINISM, AND ART CULTURE

as a wonderfully literal and comedic task—locating and characterizing a full, historic range of images of the male member. The drive to inventory continues in "From Liberation to Lack" (1987), in which Schor lists 20-odd feminist and art historical texts on her shelves. They run the gamut from *Our Bodies Ourselves* to *The Second Sex* to *Sexual/Textual Politics*. Schor does this, she explains, "not to boast of erudition but to illustrate the feminist dilemma, which is that all of these books remain relevant."

Having illuminated three phases in the development of feminism: the women's liberation movement, radical feminism, and the most recent position, based in French feminist theory, which places men and women on not just different physical, but different metaphysical planes, Schor continues (and I must quote at length because this is the very passage that has been gnawing at me for three months now): "Feminism has little institutional memory, there has been no collective absorption of early achievements and ideas, and therefore feminism cannot yet afford the luxury of storage. Teaching young women to paint, I have found that every young woman who feels in herself the inchoate desire to do something, say something about her life, must begin at the same beginning, or very close to it, that my sisters and I did 17 years ago."

God, did this get me! It got me doubting my previously sturdy determination to live as though that nagging patriarchy thing can't touch me, a way of life I convinced myself had been made possible by the "sisters," now 27 years ago. It got me into three-hour phone conversations with my mother, the likes of which I hadn't experienced since she ushered me through my 24-hour radical feminist phase. That was back

in my first year of college when, as I walked through the dining hall, a male friend reached out and pinched my ass and the entire table broke into hysterical laughter. This was, perhaps miraculously, a first, and I felt my cheeks fill hot and red. I ran to my room, cried for hours, then called my mother, who calmed me with her half-in-jest theory that scientists need look no further because in fact it's men who are the "missing link." Having never endured a birds and bees chat, I often count this lesson as my induction into womanhood.

Upon reading *Wet*, it occurred to me, not for the first time, but with the most clarity, that I owe to myself and to others more than 24 hours of phase two. Phase one could also use some attention. I have a friend my age who has pinned to her bathroom wall a few little feminist poems with titles like "How to be a Woman in a Man's World." When a mutual friend commented, "Isn't that, like, kind of over?," I agreed for the moment, finding such sentiments naive, and not wanting to admit that these concerns remain relevant. And as far as phase three goes, I guess I might someday buckle down and dig in to French psychoanalytic and linguistic theory, not for the fun of it, but because it is part of the history, part of the process in actively pursuing the "inchoate desire to do something, say something about [my] life."

A particularly valuable aspect of Schor's collection is that it traces her own three phases as a writer, which she identifies as progressing from "pre-theory, to theory, to post-theory." She explains in the preface that in preparing her essays for publication she debated over the question: "Does one leave the original writings intact as historical artifacts?" Thankfully she answered yes, and did not reconsider and update her ideas. This way we get ruminations on Ana Mendieta's art just after her death, not a decade later when so much has been written and said about an icon of feminist art history. We also get a recorded history of the Guerilla Girls, beginning with their formation and first injections into New York's boy-run art world in 1985. And later, we find a 1995 essay, "Painting as Manual," which considers the so-called death of painting in the light (or shadow) of computerized virtual reality.

Schor presents history—of feminism and of art—so truthfully, with so much of its original integrity still intact, and with so little agenda interference that it can behave like poetry. It is evocative not because it's open-ended, but because, unlike much writing on complex issues, which tends to get skewed and even manipulative, you can trust it, and listen to it, and learn where it leads you.

—JENNIFER LIESE

An editor at Provincetown Arts, Jennifer Liese directs DNA Gallery. She is a graduate student in art history at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

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Husband of Process: Keith Bergman, Town Manager of Provincetown

INTERVIEW BY CHRISTOPHER BUSA

Keith Bergman feels his greatest accomplishment, since becoming the longest serving town manager in Provincetown's recent history, is the implementation of a community oriented policing. COP gives everyone a place at the table, to solve problems in a cooperative and involved atmosphere—instead of the very unfriendly traditional method of police coercion. One town manager, prior to Bergman, used state police and attack dogs to control the frolic of late night summer crowds at Spiritus. The result was a nasty summer of unrest. The miracle of a small town is that change can appear overnight, as sometimes happens with children and other innocents.

COP, Bergman says, is a process, a partnership process between the community, the police, and local government. He is proud of the results. Hate crimes have dropped more than 90 percent during the past five years. Only two hate crimes were perpetrated here last year, compared with more than 20 in 1991, before the plan was introduced. Bergman is quick to credit Chief of Police Robert Anthony, Civil Rights Officer Sgt. John K. Henderson, and activist John Perry Ryan for the instrumental roles they played in creating an effective synthesis of education, enforcement, and victim assistance. COP has fostered a climate, safe for tourism, which, blissfully, we now take for granted.

Provincetown's efforts have not gone unnoticed outside of town. The Plan to Overcome Hate Incidents received a citation from Massachusetts Governor William Weld and innovation awards from the Massachusetts Municipal Association and the International City/County Management Association. Both Bergman and Anthony received community service awards from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.



KEITH BERGMAN PHOTO BY MARGARET BERGMAN

Bergman has a masters degree in city and regional planning from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. When he was an undergraduate at Vanderbilt University, one of his heroes was David E. Lilienthal, a founding director of the Tennessee Valley Authority during the Depression. He went on to become the first chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. (His son, David, is locally active with Cape Codders Against Racism.) Lilienthal, a visionary federal bureaucrat, codified his belief in what he called "government at the grassroots" in his book *TVA: Democracy on the March*, which chronicled the impact of the huge federal agency on the Tennessee Valley, including, through decentralization, the partnerships developed with the state and local governments of the region. Bergman thinks about Lilienthal's work in dealing with the National Park Service, which surrounds Provincetown like an ocean.

CHRISTOPHER BUSA: Do you keep a little notebook or memo recorder for your spontaneous thoughts?

KEITH BERGMAN: I write by longhand on legal pads only when I'm away from a computer. I prefer to use the computer—otherwise it's like doing it twice. I try to pour out my brain right into the computer, and come back and edit later.

CB: Did you become computer-savvy in advance of your position here in Provincetown?

KB: It's been an evolutionary process. My computer literacy was low through college, the '70s, the time of punch cards and a mainframe computer where you had to stand in line behind the engineering majors to time-share for three or four minutes. At the Kennedy School at Harvard there was a program to teach us some computer logic, but I didn't take it. I'm not a programmer, I'm a user. I still don't have a clue to the logic behind a computer. My introduction to the computer was when I was executive secretary for the town of North Andover. We had one computer in Town Hall tied into a time-sharing with a local business. I wanted to have some spread-sheet technology, at least to do some simple mathematical calculations. I learned to use Lotus 1-2-3, so I could write formulas and produce spread sheets to chart the financial condition of the municipality. I took that information to my next job in Scituate, where once again there were no computers. It seems that in each town I've gone to, computers arrived shortly thereafter. I learned word-processing, and discovered WordPerfect as Town Administrator for Scituate. Because I was more computer proficient than those around me, I was tied to my desk station, making it difficult to get out and around.

CB: Because you were helping them or doing your own work?

KB: If I was doing my own work, it couldn't even be accessed by other people, because my secretary was very much afraid of the computer. She didn't want her own computer; we didn't share a common database. There was no network. Now at Provincetown Town Hall we have PC's at virtually every workstation. I can prepare memos for my secretary, and she can complete them. She can help edit a project I'm working on as I go along. It's much more cooperative.

CB: Because she has a copy on her screen?

KB: Yes, she has access from her computer. I must say I made it a point, during my first year here, to stay away from the computer, since I had been trapped, essentially, in my office in Scituate because of that computer. I was determined not to get trapped in my office when I came here. But I found, without that technology, we couldn't get things done. Slowly we've got to the point where computers are in every office. We're far more efficient. We can crack out a town budget in no time at all. In the old days, at 5:00 PM on the day the town meeting warrant closed, there would be wild fury that afternoon and pieces of paper with handwriting on them would have been filed in the town clerk's office. Over the next week, a typewritten document would be produced, a rough draft of the warrant, which

would then have to go to the newspapers for publication. Now at five o'clock we print out the final copy of the warrant and post it on our library web site. It's all done. Some of it is just plain old advance planning. But the computer has made a difference. Talk about productivity: you call last year's report up on the screen, and step one is to change all the dates. In five seconds you have your first draft of a new budget.

CB: I was looking through the Internet and saw you had an e-mail address for your Town Hall office.

KB: Just in the last year I've begun a nodding acquaintance with the Internet. My mind is beginning to think of how the town can communicate with its citizenry, and how the town can do more of its business on the Internet. Already there is a lot more information on the Internet about Provincetown than your average town. I like to see which newspapers nationwide are on the Web. I lived in Nashville, Tennessee, when I was in college, and it's an area where I'd like to find out what's going on there, but they don't have a paper on line. I was surprised to find several Provincetown publications on line, like the *Provincetown Banner* and *Provincetown Arts*. Plus, there is Provincetown Village and Cape Cod Access. A lot is out there, just not in a very coherent form.

CB: Al Gore is a big fan of the information superhighway, but Bill Clinton, I read, can't even type!

KB: I'm disillusioned. I took personal typing in high school, so I would know how to type with all 10 digits. My older daughter who is in fourth grade is a proficient typist now. She's been doing it for a couple of years. In our time it was only the business majors who would learn how to type. Now it's like a basic walking-around skill.

CB: Kids are learning to keyboard at the same age they learn to skateboard. In college I took speed reading courses and could read as fast as John F. Kennedy zipping through James Bond books. But there is some truth in what Woody Allen said about speed reading. He took the course, read *War and Peace* in an hour. What was it about? Woody answered, "Russia." I now read very slowly. I'd rather have less words, more meaning. That's a bureaucratic issue, too.

KB: I have a lot to read. I do an enormous amount of writing in the course of a work week. Memos, reports, information into the computer. I find that I read about as fast as I write. I write fast, but I should be able to read a lot faster than I do.

CB: Speed reading is a way of skimming for information, but when you are reading for tone, emphasis, subtleties, you need time, as you do reading a poem, to reflect on associations and connections. The very thing you are trying to block out of your concentration when you are reading fast, is the very thing you try to bring in when you are reading reflectively.

KB: Errors in my writing drive me nuts, a comma out of place, the wrong tense, a mis-spelling. I'll go through six or seven edits of a single memo to get it right. I think about who the audience is. Most of the stuff I write is information for the

Board of Selectmen, so I am careful about not editorializing the information I give them, unless that's my purpose—if the specific purpose is to make a recommendation that will sway the reader. Sometimes I feel like I give writing lessons to my employees, if they give me a draft, and I give it back to them. The one thing I can't stand in the public sector is what I call the mystery novel, where you have to read a three-page memo to the last line to find out what they're saying. At the Kennedy School they taught us how to write for government purposes. The first sentence should say what your main conclusion is. Whatever a mystery writer would put at the end, you should put in the first sentence. I found that in the real world, you could not be so blunt and just spit it out. So I pay homage to the reader in the opening paragraph: "... as you may know, this, that, or the other thing led to the point where we are today. Therefore this is what you need to know." The conclusion must come soon. At the Kennedy School we learned that people in the public sector stop reading after the first paragraph, if they don't get it. It's not a short story where you can build up characters.

CB: You are more involved with information than emotion, and the writing is less expressive. I had a very good lawyer who taught me a lot about writing just because of the clarity of his sentences. Without any jargon he made all the discriminations a legal mind must make. He went to Yale where they taught him to be clear. An essential characteristic of an education is language skills. It's nice there's a respect for that now at Town Hall. The interaction between people by memo is a great way to create records that verify your thoughts. There is nothing like getting it down on paper. People learn by doing. The more they do it, the better they get. Is this improvement becoming part of the process?

KB: With some people, if I get one paragraph from them, I am grateful. I would prefer to have much more information, but some people's communication skills are oral. I communicate best in writing, but I don't avoid communicating in the other ways. Here I'm at the microphone a lot at town meeting, answering questions, presenting information, with so much frequency that I don't have time to think about being nervous. I used to fear getting up in front of that microphone, when my trips to the microphone were maybe once a year.

CB: Gives you lots of time to worry in between.

KB: Sometimes I would get to the microphone and, until I opened my mouth, I was not sure whether I was going to be confident, nervous, whatever. If I took the microphone and felt confident about it, maybe five minutes later, when I was called to the mike again, I was suddenly nervous. There was no consistency. Now it's second nature. There are times when stage fright comes, but I don't think about it.

CB: Public speaking is an essential skill for public officials. One wonders what Clinton thinks about, going to bed, the night before he ad-

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dresses the nation. The relation between literary writing and orality interests me. There are painters who are very verbal about their practices, but they are not skilled at writing it effectively on paper. But if I interview them, I sometimes hear a highly descriptive language that is a kind of poetry. I think public officials value orality much higher than other people. Memo-taking, letter-writing, reports and minutes, are a way of documenting the results of a conversation or meeting. They are not meant as literary documents, but they share a respect for clarity, precision, concision, emphasis, vividness—all the things basic to good communication.

KB: In local government we seldom do anything close to speechwriting, a distinct art form. Clinton is more of a master than I realized at the beginning of his first term. He seemed just to be this Arkansas governor who wanted to appear like John Kennedy. The way he tilted his head, and punched the air with his finger, seemed Kennedyesque gestures, but the more I see him speak, the more I see he has own distinctive style. It is in the same class as Kennedy, but Clinton is a master of it in his own right. As David S. Broder and Haynes Johnson write in *The System*, during the most important speech of Clinton's first term, when he was going to unveil his health care plan to the nation, he got to the podium, and the wrong speech had been loaded into the teleprompter. For seven minutes, Clinton gave the speech from memory and improvisation, before his staff got the right speech on. And nobody knew. You couldn't tell from watching the speech. It was impassioned. He knew exactly what he was talking about, but here he was up there with no net and delivering the speech of his career. That's a skill we just don't get called to acquire. It's interesting to compare our audiences with the federal level. If Clinton's giving a speech, he's trying to sway the public. He's got the voters as his audience. Through the voters, he wants to sway their Congressmen, so when a bill comes before Congress, the coast is clear politically for Congressmen to vote with Clinton. There is no similar situation in small-town local government.

CB: Where you speak to the people, past the politicians?

KB: Yes, there is no way here for unedited information to get out to the public directly. It gets out through the local newspapers.

CB: There is no fireside chat.

KB: No Lincoln-Douglas debate where the entire community gets to be educated about the candidate's stand on issues of importance. You get snippets about the electoral process, but little about how public policy gets decided. Our congress is the town meeting. In all the town meetings I've watched I can only think of a handful where anyone's vote was swayed by what they heard at town meeting. On the important issues—a new fire station, the school budget—people's minds are already made up. No impassioned speech will change that.

CB: The nature of passion is brevity. To have the debate and the vote immediately afterward

allows for no time lag, no time to sift for sense, if sense be valued.

KB: Take the health care example. Clinton gets to unveil his health care plan in a speech to the nation, which sets the tone for months of negotiation with congressional committees, through a process by which information is gathered and positions are formed. We don't have that here.

CB: Is that unfortunate, or is that a plus?

KB: I think it's unfortunate. It leads to inconsistencies from one town meeting to the next, on great issues that face the town. For all of the time I've been here, I've dealt with solid waste disposal, vis-a-vis the National Park Service. The day the town received a letter from superintendent Andy Ringold, Cape Cod National Seashore, in February 1990, was the day of my second job interview. He was just a few months into his job. Ringold announced that the landfill was going to reach capacity by the end of May. We were to stop using the landfill and find another way to get rid of our solid waste. The summer was coming. Could we do something with Truro? First yes, then no. Could we construct a transfer station at some site other the landfill site, which is owned by the National Park Service? We went to town meeting in 1991 and got funding for design and permission to put a transfer station at the old burn dump site, Site 6. Every town meeting the same issues come up, but there are always different people. At one meeting we get the money to study Site 6. At the next we have a vote that nixes Site 6. The next meeting says we can only put it on Site 9. Another meeting will give us money for a Site 6 East instead of Site 6 West. There was no forum. We approached the issue incrementally. We did what we had to do to accommodate the National Seashore, as opposed to agreeing as a community about what we want to do. Suddenly in December, 1993, Congressman Gerry Studds got a deal for us with the National Park Service director, Roger Kennedy, to let us put a transfer station on the landfill site. That deal does not involve wastewater, a significant change in policy, which occurred in essence because that's the only deal we could get. Without any public discussion, without any public realization, suddenly the parameters of what the town wanted had changed. Solid waste disposal, finding a site for the transfer station, was here right now and that was the deal we ought to get and not sour it up by attaching anything else to it. Even now, four years later, we can't say what is the wastewater facility we want to put on Seashore property or anywhere else. We still haven't divined that.

CB: Are you speaking of a sewage treatment plant?

KB: There may be a more neighborhood-based technology. We've got a very broad, inclusive wastewater management planning process trying to determine what type of sub-surface disposal systems we want and what alternative technologies are there.

CB: The problems with the Seashore are territorial. Who likes to be told they can't use their own bathroom?

KB: I think we've had to defend the town a lot more because of the many other layers of government that weigh in. The town doesn't have the authority to simply make a decision and carry it out. We have to defend those decisions to other levels of government, in a way that far exceeds what other communities have to do. I point to the Seashore and the Cape Cod Commission as two layers of government that other communities in Massachusetts simply don't have to cope with. Off-Cape, there's not a regional land-use agency, it's a local agency, a planning board, a zoning board of appeals, a conservation commission. And you have the state agency, the state DEP, or whatever environmental agency oversee things. And that's it: if the locals and the state say yes, you're set. Just on our transfer station, we spent 18 months before the newly formed Cape Cod Commission figured out how it was going to deal with us. Who the hell was the Cape Cod Commission to tell us whether or not we can put a municipal solid waste disposal facility on property we own?

CB: Is the Cape Cod Commission a state agency?

KB: No, it's a regional agency, a county agency. In fact, the governor is proposing abolishment of all county government, including Barnstable County. We're not certain what the authority of the Cape Cod Commission will be once Barnstable County disappears. There is a utilitarian argument. If we have to continually re-think what we are doing, then we have to fine tune our thinking. But I think we've been forced to overdo it and explain ourselves to too many other layers of government, especially the Cape Cod Commission, for no good cause. The Seashore I can understand. Our strategy of dealing with the Seashore is essentially to figure out how they think, what restrictions and constraints and perimeters is the Seashore, a unit under the National Park Service. We need a solution of mutual respect, just as they try to craft solutions that respect the position the town is in. But I can't say that with respect to the Cape Cod Commission, regarding our dealings with solid waste. In this one case, we got manhandled.

CB: Do you think the creation of the National Seashore was in the best interests of the town?

KB: Without question. Provincetown would be very different, today, if there was not a National Seashore here 35 years ago. We would be more developed and less desirable.

CB: One of the things I noticed in our latest run-around with the National Seashore was that we were able to identify our grievances. We are trying to make our case for a privileged relation to the Seashore property that surrounds us, because of our historical position here. So there's a philosophical issue of local rights versus nation's rights. Is there a policy guiding the Seashore's relation to the town?

KB: Cape Cod National Seashore is the single most important relationship Provincetown has. Over 70 percent of Provincetown—including most of our open space, is owned by the federal government and held as National Seashore. We are surrounded by a unit of centralized control, not one that is decentralized. The Park Service

often does not know what to do with local people and their way of life. We are simultaneously at both ends of a continuum of human activity. Most activity occurs at the center of this continuum, and is governed by laws and contracts. The further away from the center, the more tenuous and voluntary the relationships become. At one extreme is the family unit where contact is based on intimacy; at the other are great nations where contact is governed by treaties that have led, instead, to war. It strikes me that Provincetown and the Seashore exist at both ends of this spectrum—either intimates in an almost familial way, yet about to declare war. We are at once too close and too far away.

CB: There's solidarity—a uniformity seldom seen—in the town about protecting itself from the Seashore, as opposed to the usual quarreling between groups.

KB: I'd agree with that, but not to say there are not skirmishes in the town just below the surface on a particular issue.

CB: Such as the use of jeeps on the back shore?

KB: Yes. Here is an inverse relationship: the farther away you get from Provincetown, the more you support the National Seashore. The selectmen convened a meeting of the six towns, Chatham, Orleans, Eastham, Wellfleet, Truro, Provincetown, to see if we had any areas of commonality to communicate to the Seashore. We couldn't even get anybody from Wellfleet to come to the meeting. I read in the paper that someone in Wellfleet said, "Provincetown's concerns about the Seashore are not Wellfleet's concerns." Somebody came from Chatham, which has almost no interaction with the Park Service. We had selectmen from Orleans there, because they recognize that one board of selectmen was asking for assistance from another board of selectmen. So let's be collegial. The elected officials might look for support from their counterparts in other towns. Not to get that was an eye-opener; the attitude was worrisome. Things like that make Provincetown more isolated.

CB: What was Truro's objection? Love thy neighbor, but not thy neighbor's excrement?

KB: They didn't want Provincetown's trash. There was vehement, almost venomous opposition in Truro, enough to convince the Park Service that there was no hope of an agreement. At least we tried, and we proved to ourselves that no one else wanted us. Indeed we couldn't get a deal. Provincetown is a full-service community because we are an urbanized community, after going through miles of rural area on the way to the end of the Cape.

CB: In the summer, when people in Truro want a little excitement, they come into Provincetown. You trained, academically and professionally, to think of yourself as a public servant. That is a little like being a minister, where one is trained to serve a mission, a cause. The egotism of the entrepreneur is projected into the power of the people, whom you serve. You want to persuade, yet you also want people to have information so they are able to make a decision that may be more intelligent than any recommendation of yours. Decisions made through the force of pub-

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to opinion will be stronger than any single opinion. You are known as the "husband of process." KB: Right. Process is as important as the substance of the decision. Especially when the subject is controversial, public hearings are essential. It's not whether the decision itself is right or wrong, but that the process has a full and open integrity. Once that decision gets made by the elected policy makers, and carried out by the voters at town meeting, we carry it out. The questioning at that point stops.

CB: Like common law.

KB: Yes. With some moral authority, you can say, this is the decision. Even when small decisions come up, we go through a public hearing process, because if we don't we hear about it. I knew if we didn't have a public hearing, we would hear from the abutters. "When did you decide to put parking spaces in the Grace Goveia building!" So we had a public hearing, sent copies of the notice to abutters. Sure the town owns it, the board of selectmen is the chief executive, it's an executive decision. But to bathe yourself in that public process is like an immunity bath. Whatever you end up with is immune from criticism that it was not fair process. That's an important inoculation. Where were you? We had a public hearing, now we've got a decision to go forward. My role is to carry out that decision. The department heads I hire have the luxury of being advocates for proposals, even for the budgets they present. My role is to carry out and

support the budget the selectmen agree on. In this year's budget there were almost \$300,000 worth of cuts the selectmen made to the budget I proposed for next year.

CB: Is your perception of your role something you brought here from previous jobs, or did you learn to articulate this after matriculating from the Provincetown School of Hard Knocks?

KB: A little of both. I'm aware that not all town managers feel the same way. Not all town managers have learned the lesson of who the boss is. I know I hadn't until I left my last job. If I had disagreements with the selectmen, I felt freer to express those in previous jobs. Town managers run the risk of not staying employed if they disagree publicly with selectmen. I had time to think about it before I came here.

CB: Why was that, Keith?

KB: I was looking for work for a solid two years prior to coming here. I was between jobs for a period of five months. I left Scituate in September, 1989, and started here in March of '90. I said in my job interview here that I'd learned the lesson of my life in Scituate. The most important thing will be to get along with the boss. In this form of government, the town manager's boss is the board of selectmen. About the time I learned that lesson, the board of selectmen decided, quite independently of any process I was going through, that they were going to get along with the town manager. They were very public about it: enough with the fighting! It was a timely

confluence. A month after my arrival, the voters, in April 1990, changed the charter, over the objections of the board of selectmen. They changed the job description, if you will, for what the selectmen would do, taking from them so much of the fun stuff, like voting on liquor licenses, and giving it to a separate board, forcing the selectmen to do what only the selectmen can do, that is, set policy. I for one am delighted the selectmen are no longer encumbered with licensing, which takes a lot of meeting time. There are many little decisions to make in a licensing context and you have decided nothing except whether a particular establishment is going to hang on to its liquor license. Is that what the chief executive of the town should be spending limited meeting time on, to the exclusion of considering matters of policy? For the last seven years, courtesy of the voters of Provincetown who amended the charter in 1990, this Board has had the time.

CB: How do you like living in Provincetown?

KB: It's like living on a college campus. Particularly in the summer, I go weeks at a time without driving a car. I'll ride my bike to conduct town business, which is just as well, since the budget does not include new vehicles this year, and the town manager's car is being used by the parking department.

Christopher Busa is editor of Provincetown Arts.

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CAP'N BILL, 1968
PHOTO BY RALPH E. ANDREWS



This photograph was taken by the captain of the Cap'n Bill, a fishing dragger, lost in a storm in 1978. In the pilothouse, driving the boat, is Ralph Andrews, the captain's son and namesake. Recently he recalled that his father took the photo himself, from the deck of the Leona Louise, owned by Ensley Canton. It was June, 1968, just before the Blessing of the Fleet—the flags are not yet up. The boat, an Eastern rig, had a new paint job, and showed only two weeks of working rust along the side, where the net is set out and hauled back. "We had just put in a new engine," Andrews said, and "I was about to get married."

Faith, Tolerance, Diversity

BY STEPHEN BURGARD

Beyond the passing summer parade, Provincetown sometimes reveals its essence to us at off times. For this native son, word that Mark Silva and others were making a special effort this season to celebrate the town's Portuguese heritage arrived across the continent in the California springtime. Thoughts of the Cape already were stirring in my imagination when early May brought jasmine to bloom in the West. Commercial Street's sidewalk in the East End at the height of summer was on my mind, with its salt air, fragrant shrubs, and rose bushes.

As I approach 50, my earliest Provincetown memories are like the postcards I collected as a kid—snapshots of wharves and weirs, and people flowing into town off boats from Boston. The Portuguese figure prominently in these recollections. For example, the daring teenager Manuel Duarte was a one-man welcoming party, thrilling crowds like a Left Bank acrobat by flipping over the heads of volunteers, lined up on the pier, into the harbor below.

I had not thought of the historic diversity of our town much during three years of writing *Hallowed Ground: Rediscovering Our Spiritual Roots*, a book on religious values in multi-ethnic America. However, last year, when my editor suggested a preface on the book's origins, I began to think about Provincetown's formative role in shaping my outlook on faith and tolerance. I recognized that I had been thinking about religion for a very long time indeed, longer by far than the period of my life spent practicing journalism.

It began in fact with memorizing the liturgy in Latin and serving Mass at St. Peter's Church. There I stood alongside young friends whose Portuguese fathers lived life as it was told in the Gospels, putting to sea as fishermen. Their mothers dispatched them on bleak and cold mornings with immaculately pressed cassocks. Over the years they and other locals developed mentors in priests like Francis Coady, Thomas

Mayhew, and Edward Burns, bonds sufficiently meaningful to make each priest's inevitable reassignment a sad occasion.

The gentle, longtime pastor Monsignor Leo J. Duarte revived St. Peter's Church and the cemetery by bringing these institutions of life and death into full symmetry with the mystical surroundings of sea and sky. The dramatic mural of stormy waters in the sanctuary of St. Peter's lingered in the imagination of even casual visitors who might see it and then step outside to witness gulls circling overhead on Prince Street. For those who made their faith the foundation of life at sea, these images were tangible. After years witnessing the frolic and levity of the Blessing of the Fleet, I glimpsed its spiritual essence when one year the dragger skipper Ralph Andrews invited me along on his first return to the "Blessing" since his father's death in a storm at sea.

The faith of Portuguese natives is one principle foundation on which Provincetown built its tolerance. The pragmatic and industrious influence of Yankee culture, the sense of the surrounding sea, and the arts community's receptivity to new ideas were others. The role of faith in helping us all get along has been of particular interest to me because of my writing on religion. As the nation becomes more diverse, and as more and more interest groups seek their share of the American dream, common values

arising from religion must underlie civic cohesiveness.

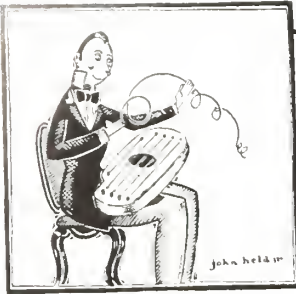
The culture wars of recent years have revealed the damage that narrow-mindedness can wreak, even and perhaps especially in the name of religion. Provincetown, with its early acceptance of gays and lesbians, offers a lesson in the religious basis for true understanding. Pragmatism—of the kind illustrated in my book by the alliance between conservative Catholics and liberal Presbyterians in Southern California, who put aside differences over abortion rights to rescue gang-infested neighborhoods—was the operative philosophy in Provincetown decades ahead of the nation at large.

The locals always have taken "respect thy neighbor" home with them from Mass to live it Monday to Saturday. Yet the populace was not unobservant of the excesses produced by a liberating realization that in Provincetown one was free to do whatever one liked. A Yankee pillar of the community who lived next door to us on Carver Street would approach errant vacationers wandering on her lawn and ask with humor, like a teacher addressing students, "Young man, you wouldn't do that at home, would you?"

While few things escaped their attention, the locals practiced acceptance. Mary A. Souza, the devout church worker who also cleaned house for my mother, climbed the spartan hills of Bradford Street en route to early morning Mass



BLESSING OF THE FLEET, 1982 PHOTO BY JOHN C. SNOW



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at St. Peters, year in and year out, summer and winter. She went about her work, and like others in the Portuguese community, did not inquire into the business of the "nice young fellas" who came annually to stay in her guest quarters.

Now that the gay community is established and ascendant, the question arises: what is next for this place open to all? We live in a time wryly described by *The Boston Globe* columnist Ellen Goodman as "post-family," when so many rules are challenged or rewritten entirely.

The town fathers of my youth are largely gone, none casting a longer shadow than my late stepfather, John C. Snow, longtime town moderator and, as an early Democrat in a land of Yankee Republicans, a symbol of another kind of Cape Cod diversity. The current custodians of the town's traditions must know that just as the fragile land is at risk from the forces of nature, Provincetown is uniquely accessible to anyone coming in on next week's tide. To insure its future, the town must pay homage to the contributions that family, custom, and tradition have made as foundations for its flourishing.

Today the external restraints imposed by our Carver Street neighbor must be supplemented by controls self-imposed by those who enjoy the freedoms that the town has constructed. There is nothing to focus this priority quite like the presence of children and the elderly. Provincetown should not awaken one day to discover itself a town only for self-sufficient adults; it must welcome families. I am bringing my own three youngsters to town this season -- a fifth generation on my mother's side to visit a place so often associated with transience.

Implicit in the Provincetown Portuguese Festival has been a full range of diversity, with all its changing definitions. This year's organizers of the Festival and the Blessing of the Fleet consciously reached out to broad groups in their celebration of diverse heritage. In their invitation they cited "our country's first resort" and mentioned "our seafaring heritage," and perhaps most importantly, took note of the town's success in having "fostered a tolerance and respect for human diversity."

Provincetown as a place and as an idea has been decades ahead of the larger culture in its reconciliation of differences. We have seen it in the acceptance of gays, in the flourishing of an artists colony, in the magical and quirky character of the town revealed in the writings of Heaton Vorse, and in the bohemian culture typified by Harry Kemp. As the town grapples with new questions arising from diversity, and redefines yet again its small corner of the American community, may it keep its wonderful sense of accommodation in mind.

*Stephen Burgard, a California-based journalist and author, grew up in Provincetown and Cambridge. His book, *Hallowed Ground: Rediscovering Our Spiritual Roots*, was recently published by Insight/Plenum. His first newspaper job ever was working with Roy Atkins, the printer of the Provincetown Advocate.*

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"Honey, We're All Swimming to the Left of Straight"

for David Ruth

Provincetown Harbor Annual Swim for Life AIDS Benefit

BY DOROTHY ANTCHAK

We have been training for weeks. Every morning at 7:00 I meet K.C. on the beach across from the Cape Codder guest house, and we swim out to the breakwater and back, pushing ourselves and each other a bit further each time. From the deck, the line of rocks that marks our destination looms almost too close; once we're in the water, it seems to recede as if with an outgoing tide. On mornings after a long night waitressing, I struggle to force my sleepy limbs to swim; the cormorants, gazing from their perch on the wall, mock my graceless lumbering strokes with their awkward tumbles into the water.

The swim has become an odd obsession, a responsibility calling me from the warm cocoon of my bed into the damp bathingsuit hanging in the shower. This is the closest I've come to commitment in a long while, but what I'm committed to is not exactly clear. It's not only knowing that K.C. will be waiting at the beach, left to swim on her own if I don't show; it's not only the sponsors and spotters and spectators we've encouraged; nor the fact that it's a worthy cause, a way to give back to the community. It has more to do with the convoluted version of a verse remembered from Catholic masses I attended as a child, a phrase that comes into my head each morning as I plunge into the chilly bay: "I do this in memory of you."

This combination of commitment and commemoration keeps me to our schedule; we need to get in shape, build endurance. On the way out we focus on perfecting our crawl, stroking with determination, trying to find a way to swim in a straight line. We have not yet grasped the mechanics of tandem swimming; we start side by side, and invariably stray off course. After 10 minutes of cutting through the waves, I stick my head up to find I've veered toward the pier, due west. K.C. is barely visible, bobbing through the water sleek as a seal, heading for Wellfleet.

We spend a lot of time swimming to catch up with one another, yet the camaraderie of these early morning dips has proved a pleasant surprise. For me, swimming has been a solitary sport, an individual endeavor, even when I was on a swim team. Striving for a personal best against the stopwatch, or in direct competition with a line of swimmers from another team, it was me, alone on the block, staring down those long roped-off lanes, ready to fly out over the water at the crack of the starter's pistol. Countless hours at the YMCA, the quiet meditative rush and splash of lap after lap, interrupted only by the tuck and turn at the wall.

We are in tandem as we approach the breakwater, managing to talk and swim at the same time, when K.C. mentions an article she's writing for the *Cape Cod Times*, about a Truro man who was walking on the flats and had a chunk



DOROTHY ANTCHAK

bitten out of his leg by a 10-foot blue shark. "Can you imagine," she says. "Guy's wading along the shoreline, and wham! This thing comes out of nowhere, attacks him."

"I heard he made it up, about the shark, to get some sympathy from his girlfriend—he hurt himself on broken glass and then the whole story got out of hand."

"I don't think so," she says. "I saw his leg. Definitely a bite mark."

Shafts of sunlight and silica probe the green-black water below me. It seems suddenly colder, as if something lying on the bottom is stirring, sending the chill of those lower layers up to the surface. The beach looks very far away. A sense of powerlessness invades my body; it takes an overwhelming effort to kick my feet, but when I pause, I sink from horizontal to vertical. "It must be the year for sharks," K.C. continues. "Did you know they found a dead one by Norman Mailer's beach last week?" I did not know this, ever would have been content not knowing. There is something to be said for the safety of pools: the humidity, the chlorine, the clear water that reveals only thick blue stripes painted to give direction. A controlled and regulated environment. The ocean is life, a vast unknown that admits danger.

When I was a kid, my overprotective parents cushioned, coddled, and cared for me like a Ming Dynasty vase. I had training wheels attached to my bike until I was 10. I wasn't allowed near large bodies of water; in winter the ice would surely crack under me, and in summer the undertow would choose me, of all the others playing in the surf, to drag to a watery death. They told stories of little girls who wandered too far from home and were never seen again, little girls who didn't stick right close by their parents in the supermarket and had to be advertised as "Missing" on milk cartons and cereal boxes.

Naturally I rebelled. I was convinced I had the spirits of all my dead relatives watching over me, celestial protection. I assumed an air of in-

vulnerability; nothing bad could possibly happen, not to me. And I proved it by disobeying every one of my parents' commands, doing things that even I questioned the safety of—diving from gorges into tiny pools, skitching from the bumpers of speeding cars, hitchhiking across Massachusetts. The injuries I brushed off were minor, which further proved my immunity. Only in recent years, as I've witnessed young, vital friends succumb to AIDS, has this feeling of invincibility frayed. Swimming in these gentle waves, submerged in the elixir of life from whence all living things originated, might be a form of rebirth. Instead I am immobilized by the thought that I have simply been incredibly lucky.

Greased and goggled, 172 of us stand shivering on Long Point, at the very tip of Cape Cod, waiting for the Ninth Annual Swim for Life to get underway. Brainchild of Jay Critchley, the generates money for local AIDS support groups and health organizations that work to service our disproportionately large population of people suffering with HIV. In his master of ceremonies hat, Jay checks off our names, insuring that someone will notice if we don't surface on the opposite shore.

The overwhelming expanse of bay before us reduces everything to miniature. The town is a collection of dollhouses; the boats are bathtub toys. We blaze an imaginary trail across the 1.4 mile distance from shore to shore. To the east the Pilgrim Monument touches the sky; to the west, the finger of the Coast Guard pier is like a narrow road built on water.

A man in a black mesh maillot holds his arm straight in front of him and squints down the length of it, as if sighting a rifle; several swimmers next to him hover at his shoulder, staring past his bicep at an imaginary line across the water. Everyone is nervously chatty, discussing the best course to take, what to do about leg cramps, telltale signs of hypothermia. As we scuff in the sand, the powder-fine grains dust our vaselined legs like a coating of flour. "Swim to the left of straight," a friend advises, factoring wind and current. "Honey," the man in the maillot says, "we're all swimming to the left of straight," and the crowd laughs.

"Swimmers, are you ready?" Critchley calls out, and we answer with a roar. He blows his whistle and we plunge into the bracing surf—feet, legs, hips—and when it is deep enough we dive, striking off through the waves, as though our lives depend on it. The water churns with bodies. I feel a flicker of panic, and something like regret, but I am in it now. I miss K.C., whom I have lost sight of. But there are boats. There

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JOURNALS OF MYRON STOUT

Edited by Christopher Busa

Preface by Bill Jensen

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Myron Stout, who died in 1987, was a distinguished painter who moved year-round to Provincetown in 1952. While painting, for 20 years he kept a meticulous journal in which he explored and revised his thoughts about painting and painters, both living and long dead. The Whitney Museum published excerpts from these journals in the exhibition catalogue that accompanied the artist's retrospective there in 1980, the major recognition of his career, occurring when he was disabled with blindness (described in the journals). The entire manuscript deserves comparison with the classics of writing by artists, including Delacroix's *Journals* and Van Gogh's *Letters*. The curator of the Whitney retrospective, Sanford Schwartz, wrote that Stout "takes for granted that he can say exactly what he wants to say, and this gives his prose a flowing ease. Always articulate, frequently eloquent his sentences and thoughts come to him as complete, balanced, effortlessly many-claused entities."

■ ON HER FACE THE LIGHT OF LA LUNA BY MARIYM CRUZ-BERNAL

Frontispiece by Michelle Weinberg

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Mariym Cruz-Bernal is a native of Puerto Rico and a graduate of the MFA Program in Writing at Vermont College. She is the author of a book of poems written in Spanish, *Poemas para no morir*, and the translator, with Deborah Digges, of *Ballad of the Blood* by Maria Elena Cruz Varela (The Ecco Press, 1995). Her poems in English have appeared in the *American Poetry Review*, *Boston Review*, and *Provincetown Arts*. She lives in Puerto Rico and is the mother of two small children.

"In the last years of the 20th century it seems to me that poetry has become fearful, and poets will not come out from behind their work. Some of us wear the masks of dead gods. We lean against monuments and with our fingers trace the epitaphs, piece together fragments and call them poems. Those of us who are obliged to be political rant and rant, but this can be another form of hiding. And oh, the tired third person, ourselves cast as others! I am grateful to Mairym Cruz Bernal whose magical lyric opens, full faced, on a life entire."

—DEBORAH DIGGES *BOSTON REVIEW*

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are people watching over us. We are all in this together.

A few hundred yards from shore, the swimmers thin out. The temperature seems to rise from freezing to refreshing, but my stroke feels off-kilter, bringing to mind childhood swim lessons, kicking and paddling in the shallow end of a clear blue pool, reluctantly learning to breathe in, blow out with 20 other children. It hardly seemed worth the effort then, all that struggling, the panicked flapping and flailing beneath the surface to propel yourself a few feet -- until the instructor delivered the key. "Just relax," he said. "Stop fighting the water and let it carry you."

His long-ago advice calms me. I lie in the sea as if it were a bed, immerse myself in the thrust-push-glide, thrust-push-glide of my stroke. Waves kiss the back of my neck; they break and ripple like fingers across my shoulders. My hands pull the water to me, then push away. Underwater currents, pulses down my sides and across my stomach. My feet flutter like a heartbeat behind me. Two strokes and I turn to gulp air, the bubbles of my exhalation loud beneath the surface.

Lulled by the lifting, rocking swells and the rhythm of respirations, my mind moves beyond the mechanics of breathing and stroking. Thoughts come unbidden, without connections, like floating things. Days ago, after one of our early-morning training sessions, I found the bowl of an old clay pipe, darkened by algae and smoothed by a century of tumbling beneath the waves. Thinking of it now, I dream the life of the man who smoked that pipe, think of him standing at the deck of an old wooden ship in this very harbor, scanning the coastline for something recognizable, some moving shape that might hint at the future.

I look ahead for my reference points. The shore doesn't seem any nearer. The grease on my goggles renders everything blurry. I don't have any trouble spotting the monument, but the line of the pier is harder to find. A few swimmers are far ahead of me, a few swimmers far behind, and I am oddly alone in between. Probably a mile still to go. The sandy bottom has fallen away to a black-green darkness, and that familiar dread, an uneasy sense of danger, seeps inside me. The rhythm of my stroke falters. Something's lurking just out of sight, I can feel it -- something hungry and waiting for the perfect opportunity to strike.

In a frantic effort to see more clearly, I rip off my goggles and tread water while I spit-rinse each lens and once again fit them over my eyes. My legs dangle below me, like bait for sharks, and I make an effort to kick strong and sure -- no weak and dying fish am I, no easy prey.

I think "faster!" and some of that forgotten competitive spirit takes over, and I pull through the water with renewed determination. "Don't surrender, Dorothy!" my late friend David once shouted to me in a road race. I hope he is watching now. He wouldn't let me be eaten alive like some silly actress in a lousy horror flick. Besides, I know there is something after the death

of the physical body. I think of the names I helped to print on the rainbow of prayer ribbons snapping in the breeze on the deck of the Boatslip, and the faces they belong to: David, Frank, Ernest, Mark, Jimmy, Albert, John, Billy, Thom, Raymond. So much energy doesn't disappear.

And then I see them, floating in the water below me. Blobs no bigger than eggs, opaque milky-colored spheres, ghostly globule souls of the dead. Jellyfish, comb jellies, hundreds of them, flashing miniature lightning bolts of glorious brilliant neon, green and purple. I dive for a closer look and swim through clouds of them, cupping them in my hands until my straining lungs send me to the surface. The moment has the radiant logic of epiphany: a cycle, yes, the unquenchable electricity of human energy returning to the sea. My friends float below, urging me on, cheering in phosphorescent pulses. Even though we no longer speak the same language, I appreciate this communication, this communion. Flashes pass before my eyes like poorly spliced film, things I'd suppressed for years to save myself from death by sadness -- silly things, trivial things, the stuff a life is made of. Remembering is not quite so painful, is almost a comfort.

Just a few feet in front of me I spot an orange head bobbing in the waves. Eager to share my new found optimism and pass on some encouragement, I call out "How you doing?" No acknowledgement, so I call again, louder, so that they might hear through the tight wrap of their bathing caps. When there is still no answer, I think perhaps the swimmer is suffering the confusion caused by hypothermia, and I kick harder to reach him or her. But as I swim beside the orange head, I see that it's in fact a buoy marking someone's anchorage. "Never mind," I say, and look around to make sure none of the spotters have noticed me and think I'm delusional, talking to buoys and jellyfish. I laugh out loud, and in that instant I swallow a lungful of water. Panic returns as I gasp for breath, but nothing comes for a long minute; then there is a gurgling in my chest and I choke and sputter and wheeze, desperate for air. The sounds bring back another memory: David in the hospital, a respirator pumping oxygen, blasting indifferently through his spasmodic, guttural coughs, and me sitting on a chair beside his bed, counting his breaths and the hissing of the machine, as if my counting would keep his inhalations and exhalations coming. "Just breathe," I hear, like an ancient echo of my bedside pleas, or a whisper from the jellyfish below.

As my feet touch sand, I glimpse the rainbow of ribbons that includes the names of so many lost friends. I am able to remember now, to dream those lives that touched mine. *I have done this in memory of you.* ■

Dorothy Antczak is a fiction writer who lives in Provincetown.



PHOTOS: SALLY WALKER

East End Environmental Sculpture

BY WALKER GILMORE

We have gone to P'town every summer of my life, and along with dinners out, sun, and general vacationing, digging in the sand has been part of the whole experience. What I make in the sand has grown from what my father used to make with us as children. As we stopped making things as father and sons, I started making things myself. Ideas evolved, year by year, from castles, numbers (for birthdays), or forts, to pure design. I notice myself getting less figurative and literal as I get older. Faces, mermaids, and animals over time became circles, arrows, and mounds. I consciously see a link between my work and Keith Harings's patterns and Christo's use of the outdoors, but I probably have stolen from a huge number of people, like Calvin and Hobbes, who tramped in the snow messages like "Aliens Land Here."

During summer days, the yellow sightseeing airplane flew along the bay, and I liked to think how the people in the plane could see the work better than I could from the ground. They saw the undulation of the shape, how symmetrical the pattern was, whether I was distracted in the middle, and the children and dogs helping to make and unmake the piece. Then, when the tide rolled over the flats, the waves would reflect the pattern under them by how they broke. After the night tide, the piece usually survived enough to serve as a platform for a new one the next day. Sometimes the lines were softened and blurred by the weathering of the tides, rendering a cleaner pattern than when it was raw, one more integral with the flat itself, and this helped clarify the design.

I am more in touch with the work I have done in recent years, using the shovel to make larger shapes with repeated units, than I am with my

earlier stuff, which seems to be more about animating the beach with a face or a reaching hand. Then I was more concerned with accuracy to form; now I am accurate to the pattern but I seek a less strict goal. Before I was interested in shells, seaweed, and colored sand; now, when I set out to dig, I only deal with sand, light, and the shadows of the day that progress across the pattern.

I like the feel of the shovel's repeated biting into the sand, and the burnishing of the tip, which gets shinier. I like the way my body works. At the end, I like the ache in my back. The animals go over it, the children touch it, and the adults keep off. I often wonder when that boundary was established—when had a certain amount of sand been moved, and it was clear I was making a thing? I don't care. What happens gets absorbed in the process. I was more protective as a child building castles with my father, even if we used to jump on the castles after the tide had swallowed them. I was less a participant then in the moving of sand, and more underfoot, where I loved watching the mounds grow into guard towers, and the moats and canals get deeper.

With some of my patterns, I stray from simplicity, and these fail. When I make one I really



like, I have a feeling of accomplishment that is not in any way diminished by the transience of the work. In fact, the short life of hard work makes me more appreciative. I know I would lose the feeling if machines did my designs. ■

Walker Gilmore, whose family summers in the Walker compound in the East End of Provincetown, is the great-great of T.B. Walker, the founder of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Now living in New Orleans, he says he finds "stream-of-consciousness writing more natural to thoughts on sand stuff."



Clown on the Edge

BY IVY MEEROPOL

To the undiscerning eye a clown is a clown. Red bulbous nose, floppy shoes, a ferocious grin. But the clown world is populated with varied manifestations of Clown. There is the Party Clown, to many the lowest form, who caters to children with balloon twisting and startling honks. There is the equally familiar Circus Clown, descendent of a clowning dynasty or fresh from clown college and disparaged as some hard-knocks authors scoff at writers anointed with an MFA. The mime, the harlequin, the fool, the jester. And then there is Mat Coes, a local artist and musician who is all of these clowns and more.

Having done the party circuit and travelled with five circuses, Coes returned to his native Provincetown (his father is local artist Peter Coes) to contend with his own clown, a quest familiar to all artists searching for their own voice. They know it's in there, but what does it sound like? This question is not always welcome in an artform that stresses conforming to conventions. When Bobcat Goldwaithe performed as Shakes the Clown in the movie of the same name, The World Clown Association boycotted it. For Coes, however, the idea is to be your own clown, one who is not an alter ego, or a character played, but is what he calls "a part of oneself."

Before he could buck clown tradition and branch off on his own, Coes had to learn the ropes from established schools of clowning. After one year in the theater program at Salem State College, he quit and applied to the clown college of the Ringling Brothers Circus. For 10 weeks and 15 hours a day in the Florida summer heat he trained to be a modern clown, a stylized being who doesn't speak and works in an ensemble with other clowns. Coes was one of 50 chosen from a pool of 5000 applicants. Admission was based on answers to questions like "when was the last time you cried and why?" Among fellow clown trainees were an accountant, a drug dealer, a rocket scientist, and a lawyer. But all were clowns at heart, their varied backgrounds supporting the notion that the clown doesn't play a role as a job, but simply is a clown, who doesn't mind getting paid. Coes always knew he was a clown and when asked why says, "I have no idea, I just am."

After clown college and numerous stints with both large and small circuses, Coes tired of the familiar world of sweaty high school gyms and meager crowds, and decided to go solo. It was with Franzen Brothers that he performed his first solo gag—as a clown unable to read a newspaper and remain seated on a chair at the same time. The paper would fall and he would try, and fail, to remain seated while retrieving it. The actions represent a baffling single-mindedness



MAT COES ON THE BACK SHORE

regarding the relationship between the chair and the newspaper. The clown links the two inextricably and demonstrates an attachment to what might be called "literal action." He takes cause and effect as constants, and when the relationship does not hold, makes a futile attempt to maintain that literal action, causing chaos and hilarity. The gag also recalls the old challenge of walking and chewing gum at the same time. Coes message is as simple as reminding us to put one thing down before picking up another, and as complex as a subtle reprimand toward those who get so caught up in the machinery of life they lose track of the truth.

For Coes, a clown is at once the "everyman" and the "other" who must have both universal appeal and an illuminating effect. He says that clowns are "different creatures" and when asked to clarify, states matter-of-factly, "There are people, dogs, cats, and clowns." Krusty the Clown, a regular character on *The Simpsons*, exemplifies this by living entirely as a clown. A good clown—a clown with a purpose other than making children giggle—will have an edge on humanity, a heightened perspective, a vision. Coes believes that "every good move a clown does is an expression of the human condition." Coes's clown—named Bop!—combines the circus with theater. He may perform gags, but context counts just as much, and Coes loves to have Bop! sitting at a dinner table with a "normal" family, whose behavior is seemingly bent by the presence of the clown.

At the Yearrounder's Festival this year, Bop! made a few brief appearances between acts. In one, he came on stage and simply beamed, excited by the audience and hopping with the thrill of being on stage. By avoiding any performative action, yet fully evoking the sensation of performing by means of exaggerated facial and body expression, Bop! managed to reveal a basic truism about stage-dwellers. He pokes fun at performers by showing that just being on stage is the rush they crave. And he does so with the greatest warmth, an essential criteria for his form of humor. Coes disdains those who make fun without including themselves in the mix. Bop! is accordingly a subtle clown, one who does not

set himself too far apart from humanity at large. From the balcony in Town Hall, only the out-size shoes betray him. He dresses in a t-shirt, suspenders, and black pants rolled to the knee. The makeup is light and his nose remains in proportion to his face. It is the mouth, drawn high up to the cheekbones, that accentuates the emotional expression of the face.

There is a strong tradition in clowning that concerns itself with "the little guy." The earliest clowns, court jesters, ridiculed the ruling classes, and in turn elevated the masses. While they were punished on occasion, many spent their lives in great favor. At Franzen Brothers, Coes developed a skit to coincide with an elephant act. The clown would plant a small flower in the ring and after the elephants trampled it, would return to the ring to mourn his crushed flower. The hyper-sensitivity of the clown, who focuses on the plight of the tiny flower in a ring with enormous animals, is a classic piece of clowning that reveals a very distinct philosophy. Because he is an underdog himself, the clown empathizes with the small object, and in doing so raises its stature. To find the big deal in a small thing is to be superhuman. For Coes, it is essential that a clown not just evoke laughter, but allow people to see previously hidden qualities. The flower would surely be forgotten had the clown not been there to remind us. The act was never performed because the ringmaster didn't want to confuse the elephants.

It's not easy being a clown who takes his role seriously. There are limited venues for clowning and the performance art clowning that Coes is developing has a very small audience. Provincetown is ripe for new performance pieces and seems an ideal locale for testing out new concepts. Coes's immediate goals are to bring the pages of his notebooks to life in the form of small acts. To this end, he will be performing at DNA Gallery later this summer. A long-term goal is to have his own one-ring or theatrical circus. One act idea is to show a sleeping clown who dreams of walking a tightrope or performing acrobatics, all very skillfully and effortlessly. Then, the clown awakens and attempts to make his dreams real, but finds himself clumsy and graceless. We all hold that dream-versus-reality fear inside while the clown is unabashed in its expression.

Clowns are surreal beings who operate on a highly emotional plane. They mirror our insecurities, our stunted emotions, our blind spots. But, as with so many other forms of expression, we have reduced the clown to what we can compartmentalize and understand. What is a clown? Most would say a red nose, a silly gag. If Coes has his way, watching a clown will be an experience that makes us look beyond the mask, at ourselves, and when we laugh it will be guttural and deep and truly human.

Ivy Meeropol is a screenwriter and freelance journalist currently living in Truro.

Midway Wedding

BY TRICIA VITA

In my mother's collection of postcards from the road, there's a "Cape Cod Auto Map" printed in sunset-by-the-seashore colors: coral pink, gold, lavender, and burnt orange. In the 1950s, tourists used its mileage chart to reckon the distance between towns along Route 28 from Buzzards Bay to Orleans and along Route 6 from Sagamore to Provincetown, but Mother never had to consult a postcard to take us to any of these scenic spots. Before we traveled the Cape with Colbert's Fiesta, she had been here with a carnival called Playtime. Mother knew every moonlit mile of the road to old Cape Cod as well as she knew her own heart. The auto map was a souvenir of the summer of '52. With indelible ink, Mother circled "Bourne" and wrote in big, block letters: "WHERE IT HAPPENED."

"Where what happened?" I asked her as a child. And I ask her again today.

"Where your father and I were married, of course," she never hesitates to tell me.

I follow the patchwork of colors on the auto map, all the way from the Cape's sandy shoulder in Sagamore to its grasp of the sea in Provincetown. Here, at land's end, a skinny finger of sand beckons, as if it has something to tell. What I want to know—and cannot bring myself to ask Mother—is where I was conceived.

My father, not my mother, told me how their romance began under 200 kilowatts of carnival lights in Plymouth and Hyannis and Falmouth. All the carnies could see that Rita LeSieur was doing a terrific business with her Razzleboard. Tony Vita was sure that behind those thick glasses she wore, her green eyes were flecked with pure gold. He was almost sure her reddish-brown hair was naturally wavy. When Rita's counter was clear of customers, her green-and-gold eyes wandered around the midway. She could see that Tony's Short-Range Gallery wasn't doing too well, though he had fine Italian eyes and a profile as noble as any she'd seen on coins. I always thought my mother had fallen in love with my father because he told her a good story, one that neither of them would ever tell.

Instead, my father told me what happened a few weeks after their first date: "Rita and I took a ride from Falmouth to next week's town, Bourne, to apply for a marriage license," he said. "We thought it was our secret, but when the boss, Mr. Burr, went to get the carnival permit, the town clerk showed him a copy of our license and asked, 'Do you know this couple?' And Mr. Burr offered us the opportunity to get married on his Ferris wheel."



"It'll be the biggest attraction of the season . . . a bigger draw than Fourth of July fireworks," he told them. "Headlines in all the papers: CARNY COUPLE TO WED ON FERRIS WHEEL!"

I can see that showman with a megaphone pressed to his mouth, calling the people in to attend the carny wedding. "Dear Brethren," he says (since we never call you "marks" to your faces), "we are gathered here today to join this Short-Range Gallery Man and his Razzling-Dazzling Lady in Carny Ma-tri-mony!" Instead of walking down the aisle of a chapel, the couple march down the midway. The ride foreman ushers them onto the number one seat of a ride that is ready to give them a whirl of a wedding. They go round and round on the most romantic ride in the world, and get stuck on top at the precise moment the minister shouts, "I now pronounce you husband and wife!" To the several hundred marks and the double-dozen carnies in attendance, the newlyweds look as tiny as the bride-and-groom dolls atop a wedding cake. When they kiss, it's the signal for the Ferris wheel to start turning again, and the merry-go-round's band organ to play "The Wedding March," and the carny kids to throw unpopped popcorn. As soon as the bride throws the bouquet, the concessionaires jump over the counters of their joints



ABOVE TRICIA VITA (AGE NINE)
"COVERING ALL THE RED" IN
HER FATHER'S SPOT GAME AT
BARNSTABLE COUNTY FAIR,
1962

LEFT MATRIMONIAL KISS

and get set to take in their first 25 cents of the day, to "break the ice" as we say in the business. And the marks congratulate the groom by spending every last quarter in their pockets on rides and games and food.

There are other kinds of midway weddings. A ride boy and his girl could go for a spin on the merry-go-round and—according to carny custom and without any further ado—they'd be "married." The marriage would be "Good for One Season Only" like a ride pass. Or a carny guy and gal could hold hands on "The Showman's Bible" and quickly say "I do," an exchange of vows that is known as a "Billboard wedding." But a Ferris wheel wedding with a bona-fide minister officiating, and with marks paying the expenses of popcorn and all, was the most im-

positive way for a couple of carnies to get hitched. When my mother and father rejected Mr. Burr's wedding plans for them—I'm sorry to say they did—they also passed up his wedding gift. I suspect they shied away from the fanfare of a midway ceremony because they'd both been married before: my parents weren't a couple of crazy young Johnny-come-latelies who'd get married on the Ferris wheel for the fun of it and be thrilled when the showowner threw in a set of silverware for six.

I do have the true wedding pictures, which were taken on the carnival lot after a ceremony at the home of the Reverend Orville E. Crain, and I have the story that goes with them: "On the day of the wedding, the showowner's son John and daughter-in-law Rose came along to be our best man and best bridesmaid," my father told me. "But I was so jittery about getting married again that I introduced them as 'Mr. and Mrs. Rose Burr.' Your mother had all she could do to stop laughing while the minister was marrying us."

She was still laughing when the photos were taken. Mother was so tipsy (after one shot of whiskey) that she fell into Father's arms, and the cameraman caught them just in time, too: Father's left arm scooted around Mother's shoulder, his right arm encircled her waist, and their lips met in a kiss that forever pronounces them husband and wife. In the background, I can see the rambling rosebush where the carny kids picked a big bouquet for the bride. I can see the wedding "limo" with a "Just Married" sign pinned to the antenna as if it were a butterfly they'd caught on the wing. And I can see the hitch of her house trailer, their new home on the road.

For as far back as I can remember, my parents took me with them, traveling through Massachusetts with carnivals. When we were with Colbert's Fiesta at the Barnstable County Fair and Playtime Shows was in P'town, we'd drive to the rival midway at the tip of the Cape to cut up jackpots with old friends. A fellow who'd known my folks when they were "just married" would look me up and down and say, "I knew you when you were just a gleam in your father's eye." (Was this supposed to be a clue?) His wife would chip in her two cents worth: "You're getting to be a big girl! My, how the years fly!" (If I kept listening, would somebody get around to mentioning something I didn't already know?)

I was listening when somebody began to reminisce about the lot man taking up a collection among the showfolks for my parent's wedding gift. "With a slew of singles and fins in his hat, he went out and bought two deluxe easy chairs, and then had a hell of a time fitting them in the trunk of his car!" the storyteller said.

Mother jumped right in: "Those chairs were anything but easy to find room for in my trailer!"

The boss wasn't about to spring for an expensive set of silverware after you'd refused to

say 'I do' on his Ferris wheel," an old-timer recalled.

"By the time we got to P'town though, he'd forgiven us enough to buy everyone with the show a glass of champagne at a place down the road from this very lot," my father said. Mother smiled at the memory of that night and listened almost as intently as I did while Father went on with the story.

"At nine o'clock that night, the light plant shut down and within five minutes every mark on the midway had gone home," he said. "We told them the generator was broken and wouldn't be fixed until morning. Then we went into our trailers and changed into our fanciest clothes and our dancingest shoes and walked to Weathering Heights for a drink."

The female impersonator who owned the club was already celebrating—crooning "I'm Dreaming of a Pink Christmas" when the carny wedding party waltzed in the door. What did they see? A fat lady in pink perched on a swing above the bar. My mother, a pro at guessing games, guessed that the lady in question weighed no less than three hundred pounds. The bartender handed out the prizes: frying-pan rattles and whistling balloons that were being stockpiled for a "Gala New Year's Eve Party" on the 29th of July. He popped open the champagne and poured. When Mr. Burr raised his glass and proposed a toast to the newlyweds, the showfolks raised a rumpus with the noisemakers. Everyone drank up. The piano man played a jazzy wedding march and the fat lady sang out "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!" as the carnies danced out the door and down the road, all the way back to the lot.

I imagine they kept partying after my mother and father, festooned with streamers, said "Goodnight!" 20 times and went to bed. I imagine a confab of carnies gathering in Mr. and Mrs. Rose Burr's trailer to have another couple of drinks. Before long they are picking up their glasses and their noisemakers and stepping outside to serenade the honeymooners. Singing snatches of "Jingle Bells," they hop, skip and jump round the trailer. They almost fall into the "donniker hole" and they trip over the hitch. When they grow weary of Christmas carols, Rose belts out a popular tune and everyone sings along:

"I don't care if the sun don't shine
I get my lovin' in the evenin' time,
When I'm with my baby . . ."

The revelers tap on the front door with their whistles and drum on the back door with their rattles. They twirl their flashlights like searchlights and clink their glasses against the bedroom windows in a toast to the supposedly smooching couple:

"That's when we kiss and kiss and kiss
And then we kiss some more
Don't ask how many times we kiss
At a time like this who keeps score!"

Their voices—well-trained from calling in customers—ring out on the empty lot. They shake the sturdy trailer with each rousing chorus, the opening line of which Rose soon changes to "I don't care if it rains or shines" (a terrible thing for a carny to say when sober). How many choruses do the serenaders have to sing before my mother and father invite them inside for a midnight snack? The carnies of Playtime gave a good send-off to the ghost of my mother's first husband and the hazy memory of my father's first wife. But they didn't know—how could they? Not even my folks, childless during their first marriages, could have guessed—that next season they would be cooing at me, a 1953 baby.

I've come back to Provincetown more than once since growing up and leaving the carnivals of my childhood. I've had a drink at Weathering Heights, which survived many seasons as a continental restaurant. I've climbed the Pilgrim Monument to see what can be seen from the top.

When I was a child, I never knew whether my breath had been taken away by the entrancing curve of the land, the deepening blue of the sea, or the exertion of climbing a couple of hundred feet into the sky. Mother was still giddy when we came back down to earth: she gave me a handful of change to toss off the wharf to the town kids who dove for coins.

Today, I look down at the harbor and see that the divers have disappeared. In every direction, except out to sea, the character of the view has changed. Route 6 and Route 28 are clogged with tourist traffic. Empty lots once played by carnivals have been taken over by condominiums and shopping centers. Though I can find no trace of our passage, I understand why Provincetown beckons. Here, I'm as welcome as any other outsider who is inexplicably drawn to land's end and beyond. I'm invited to stay awhile and join in a strange celebration. Here, it will always be Christmas in July! I'll never know for certain, but I like to imagine I was conceived in P'town on the night of that joyous wedding party, rat-a-tat-toot in the middle of that carny shivaree. ■

Tricia Vita, a writer and translator, spent the first 17 years of her life traveling through New England and New York with small carnivals. "Memoirs of a Carny Kid" is from a work in progress. Her translation of Taruho Inagaki's One Thousand and One-Second Stories will be published this fall by Sun & Moon Press.

("I Don't Care If the Sun Don't Shine" by Mack David Copyright 1949 by Famous Music Corp. c/o The Welk Music Corp.)



PERFORMANCE ARTIST KAREN FINLEY (HOLDING FLOWERS) WITH (LEFT TO RIGHT) MUSTY CHIFFON, RACHEL SLUR, GLORIA HOLE, AND DEMONICA HARM, FOLLOWING TRIBUTES AT KOOK PRIOR TO HER PERFORMANCE AT PROVINCETOWN TOWN HALL IN 1996

Thursdays at Kook

BY TIMOTHY XX BURTON

Kook materialized as a loose collection of drag acts, video skits, and music. Such a vague plan allows for a scene of Raquel Welch in "Myra Breckenridge" to delight the eyes while Debbie Harry wails "Heart of Glass" over the speakers. It also permits such performers as Lypsinka a chance to lip-synch as Judy Garland.

Cigarette smoke lends the most myopic of eyes 20/20 vision. That may seem illogical—smoke, as thick as adhesive gauze, can improve eyesight? Here it does. Logic melts with the speed of an ice cube in the sun. This is a place where your eyes see that which you have been told could never be. A place where you can watch fantasy shift into reality.

This is Kook.

Bustling around the too-crowded bar is one DeMonica Harm—Barbie Doll-slender, perky, eyelashes fluttering with the grace of a butterfly hovering at a flower. A co-hostess of Kook, she offers smiles and hugs to the regulars. DeMonica vibrates with internal energy, as if lodged within her were an ever-glowing ball of helium. Not far away sits Gloria Hole, her co-conspirator, an impossibly tall figure with a ubiquitous cigarette glued to her vampire-red lips. Black hair pulled back into a tight ponytail, she has the hard edge of a female Hell's Angel in stiletto heels. A halter top and skin-tight pants complete her

biker-chick look, one very different from DeMonica. Gloria is hard as chrome, DeMonica soft as gossamer. Gloria is pierced, DeMonica hole-free. Gloria is loud, DeMonica less loud. Gloria is yang, DeMonica yin. Each compliments the other. Together they are whole, with the seed of each existing within the other. Surely DeMonica has to have a bit of curdle in her creamy purity. And Gloria's got to have a bit of angel's food cake mixed in with that devil's food she embodies.

People come to Kook is to see, perhaps, if DeMonica will become Dionysian in her actions, while Gloria takes on Apollonian tendencies. Confusions are clarified and clarifications are confused. People are drawn into a circle of seeming harmony, guarded by a near invisible semi-permeable membrane. (Is smoke the membrane?) Prejudices are kept outside. Everyone who enters has accepted an essential paradox—no creation on earth has more substance than the insubstantial dream. The sandy shore of Provincetown, with its otherworldly beauty, is fertile soil for dreamers. Here, one follows the curve of the road until there is no road: the last point exists before poof!, the land vortexes into nothing. Being close to nothing, people become closer to something. Illusion thrives. It is accepted. And where acceptance lives, new truths can be born.

Kook wouldn't work if the conditions weren't right. If the men who enter the bar weren't ready to disrobe themselves of sexist ideas that impede their connections to women, Kook would fail. If the drag queen in the micro-mini didn't think s/he could talk to the straight skate rat without being bashed in the face, Kook wouldn't make it. If the hetero woman with barrettes in her hair believed that the lesbian threatened her survival, Kook would fall flat on its face. There would be no Kook if people here didn't believe in make-believe.

Make-up comes first. Before there can be a Kook-filled night, there has to be make-up. Hours before anyone enters the smoke-filled attic, Dean begins his transformation into Gloria. Ensnared in his room, eye shadow, eye liner, and lipstick tubes littering a vanity table, he peers in the mirror at himself, and considers the Kook phenomenon with some surprise.

"I don't know why it works," a slowly appearing Gloria admits. "Maybe everybody's over the tired bar scene. But it's probably because you can be a freak there and nobody cares. Everybody is a freak anyway." He closes his right eye, and with the left, follows black liquid as it makes a Cleopatra-thick line upon his lid.

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Dean didn't know what he was getting into when he and Scott were asked to host a night at the Iguana Grill, but Gloria has experienced a few fringe benefits. "I like the boys and the free booze the most," she purrs to the mirror, moving closer to sex-kitten perfection.

In the kitchen of the same house, beating confectioners sugar and cream cheese, Scott speaks with a reserved joy. Sure he's happy with Kook, but he hasn't really analyzed why the evening is a success. He dabs a finger in the bowl of soon-to-be frosting.

"We just wanted to have fun," Scott says, pouring more sugar in the bowl. "You know, a place for people to hang out and not have to have an underwear party. We wanted everyone together, like a party." Scott is surrounded with drag party favors—wigs hang on the wall, high-heel shoes clutter the corner. The cross-dressers grab bag provides fashion for DeMonica and Gloria, and for many of their friends. It's a closet for people out of the closet.

As the crowd gathers, the person closest to the stage risks

being spiked by one of Gloria's heels. She's in the middle of the room and must, somehow, make it to the microphone. With the finesse of a slam dancer in a mosh pit, Gloria hurls her enormously lengthy body into the air. The crowd responds (out of fear of being crushed?) and lifts Gloria above their heads until she lands, safe and sound, on stage. She's smacking her gum, her silver tongue piercing sparkling in her cavernous mouth as if nothing happened. And, perversely, humorously, nothing has.

It's just Gloria being Gloria and everyone being everyone, a mutual support system that shows itself in unexpected ways, in unexpected places. People inside this almost claustrophobic attic know that, outside, hatred can lurk. While little outward hatred is expressed in Provincetown, shit happens. One summer night last year, an inebriated woman offered derisive sentiments to exiting Kook patrons, placing the world's inhumanity upon the shoulders of a few drag queens. Her hatred was countered, her attempts at violence thwarted. This event could have been overlooked. But ignoring her behavior would only give it more room to survive. Those people at Kook protected what they created.

Drag queens are (thankfully) more and more present. And at Kook, it ain't got nothing to do with dancing, because there ain't a lot of room to dance. It has nothing to do with the fact that there isn't a lot of clubbing to be done in Provincetown on Thursday nights. It's got to do with the unstated realization that different people can come together, enjoy each other, learn from each other, bring about laughter, joy, insight, community—with queers, straights, bi's, and trannies—for less than three hours a week, 10:00 PM to 1:00 AM, Thursdays at Kook. ■

Timothy XX Burton is a writer, actor, and a drag queen now living in Provincetown.

Theater Buzz

BY JOSEF QUATTRO

BEEKMAN PLACE PRODUCTIONS, based in Provincetown and run by Peter Romero, will bring three original shows to the Meeting House Theater and the Club Euro Cabaret this season. One is *Open Door*, a one-man musical comedy written and performed by David LaDuca that comes to Provincetown straight from Off-Off Broadway and runs late July to early August. Call 487-7901.

At **C.A.P.E. INC. THEATER**, artistic director Marjorie Conn brings to the stage two premiere plays by local playwrights. *Mail and Femail—Letters from the Sexual Wars*, by Alexander Jasnow, explores the possibility of social intercourse between Jane Austen and the Marquis de Sade, Sigmund Freud and the prostitute/muse, Kiki. Keeping the heat high is *Mistress Ecstasy's Erotic Expo*, co-authored by Conn and yours truly, Joe Q. Directed and designed by Frank Cullen, informed buzz says its the best thing Conn's done since her last play, *Lorena Hickok & Eleanor Roosevelt: A Love Story*, which returns for a record-setting fourth year following a fall production of excerpts in San Francisco. Call 487-2666.



MARJORIE CONN

CAPE PLAYHOUSE in Dennis continues to bring Broadway to the Cape. The beautiful old theater has a summer line-up including *Carousel* and *An Evening with Jerry Herman*. The building is a masterpiece of summer stock theater with a 70-year history of transplanting New York stardom. If you have a chance to tour the theater between shows or off season, look for the wonderful collection of stage bills covering the back-stage walls. Call 385-3911.

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BEVERLY BENTLEY, MAILER, JOSE QUINTERO, BERTA WALKER
PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER BUSA

This year's manager of the **MEETING HOUSE THEATER**, which raises funds for the Unitarian Universalist Meeting House in Provincetown, is Kevin Rice—actor, director, playwright, and co-founder of W.H.A.T. Rice wants the space to show plays featuring an ethnic and cultural mix. Billed as a multi-cultural comedy, *Native Tongues*, written by Rice and produced by Tony Nunziata, runs late June to early August. It is followed in September by *Bed and Breakfast*, based on a West End guesthouse and written by Joe Godfrey. If you know him you might be in it. Another long-running show at the Meeting House is *Destiny*, an upbeat musical group performing at 10:30 most nights during the season. Call 487-4253.

REP

In May **PROVINCETOWN REPERTORY** unveiled plans for building an impressive theater on the high hill beside the Pilgrim Monument, a project requiring \$2.5 million and a land lease agreement between the Rep and the Monument. Anton Schifffenhaus called the unveiling the first step in "demythologizing" the project. He and other board members urged community involvement toward making the plan real and announced the addition of two honorary board members: Jason Robard and Julie Harris.

In late June the Rep's cause was bolstered by a visit from Edward Albee, the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright whose name has long been associated with American theater and the writer's retreat he created in Montauk, Long Island (see *Provincetown Arts*, 1994, "Edward Albee Foundation"). In a benefit "conversation" held at the Unitarian Church, Albee charmed the full house with wry humor and knowing commentary on the state and future of American theater



PATRICIA KILGARRIFF PLAYS "GRANDMA" IN EDWARD ALBEE'S *THE SANDBOX*, PROVINCETOWN REPERTORY THEATER

and on his own writing experience. Regarding the first he proclaimed, "All art is at its very best dangerous" and on the latter, explained, "Ideas come from the unconscious if you're lucky, or from your brain," then after a good pause, "or else from Newark." Albee is expected to return to town for the July opening of *Albee by the Sea*, three short works by Albee produced by the Rep and directed by Glyn O'Malley.

Also on the Rep's schedule: Jose Quintero returns to town after last year's success to direct Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*. The company is producing a more recent play out of New York: *Louely Planet*, written by Steven Dietz and directed by Seth Barrish. Call 487-0600.

The PROVINCETOWN THEATER COMPANY, housed at the Provincetown Inn, will present three plays this season: Robert Coles's wonderfully titled gay comedy *Cute Boys in Underpants Fight the Evil Trolls: A Moral Fable*; Tennessee Williams's *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*, and Edward Albee's *Seascape*. Williams's

play, set in Provincetown, has been staged only once before. PTC also presents, in conjunction with the Portuguese Festival, a play reading of a work by Portugal's leading playwright, Bernardo Santanero. Call 487-8673.

WELLFLEET HARBOR ACTOR'S THEATER enters its 13th season of presenting cutting-edge humor. In July *Dark Rapture* by Eric Obermeyer takes the stage with an "American noir" sensibility. A Rush Limbaugh character appears in *Night School*, and this Rush has something else to say than what passes over the airways. Running in August and September, Gipp Hoppe's *Future Hollow* comes in from the suburbs, and *Seven Blow Jobs* by Mac Wellman ignites the end of the season with scathing comments on political hypocrisy. Call 349-6835.

Josef Quattro, who is living in Mexico where he is writing a play, makes occasional visits to Provincetown.

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for some
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and an upbeat upstairs
with casual dining and
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**T H E
MEWS**
WATERFRONT DINING
&
Cafe

Brunch • Dinner • Entertainment
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429 Commercial Street • 487-1500

DINING GUIDE

WEST END

ALFREDO'S ON THE BAY • 487-9500

At the Provincetown Inn beachfront resort, located at the exact spot where the Pilgrims first landed, has a charming, slightly old-fashioned feel, reminiscent of its hey-day in the 1930's when city folk would visit Provincetown for the weekend in their new-fangled automobiles, complete with chauffeurs. In its second year, Alfredo's on the Bay features three-course Italian/American dinners from \$14.95, including a "Taste of Little Italy" where diners match their choice of pasta to their favorite homemade sauce. Alfredo, formerly head chef at Franco's and Stormy Harbor, has built up a local following for his delicious Italian specialties. Parking. Open June through the Fall.

THE RED INN • 487-0050 • Open year round

Dating from 1805, this is possibly the only traditional country inn on the waterfront in New England. Comfortable and elegant, with fine food and unrushed service to match the surroundings, the Red Inn features a selection of "Classic Cape Cod Cuisine" prepared with artistic flair using the freshest native seafoods and choicest meats. The dining area and tavern are right on the water for cooling sea breezes in summer, fireplace for off-season. Lovely gardens, waterfront decks, and terrific views of Long Point. Parking.

MARTIN HOUSE • 487-1327

Savor highly acclaimed American cooking with an eclectic, international flair next to one of five crackling fires from September through May or in a harborside garden during the warm months. Intimate, authentic 18th-century rooms provide a lovely and romantic setting throughout the year. Exceptional wine list and comprehensive selection of the most sophisticated spirits available. Specializing in fresh, local seafood, creative vegetarian cuisine, and featuring Angus beef, range chicken, duck, pork, lamb, game. Recommendations include: *The New York Times*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *Paris Elle*, *Yankee*, *AAA*, *Out and About*, *Genre*, *Boston Magazine*, and *Boston Globe*. Open year round.

THE RESTAURANT AT THE BOATSLIP

487-2509 • Seasonal

A baby grand piano accompanies diners at The Restaurant, where owner/manager John Twomey returns for a second season. Serving Continental cuisine, everything from Herb Roasted Chicken to Pan Seared Lobster, with an attention to detail from the first course to the last. An extensive wine collection compliments the menu in the open air dining room with rustic details and views of the bay and the town. Breakfast, lunch and dinner, seven days a week.

BUBALA'S BY THE BAY • 487-0773

This season still finds Bubala's painted bright yellow with birds on the roof and neon in the windows. Restaurant veteran John Yingling have transformed this large dining area into a buzzing bistro with murals by artist James Hansen. Water views, late night music, and the sidewalk cafe are other physical features. Bubala's offers serious food at sensible prices. Late night fare and a lively bar. Open Spring to Fall. Parking.



lunch
dinner
after theater
bar
tavern fare

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Tables*
Main Street
in the heart of Wellfleet
(508) 349-6450

*Alfredo's
... on the Bay*

Italian American Specialty Restaurant

Full Dinners
from \$14.95

Full dinners include appetizer, garden salad, potato and vegetable or pasta, fresh bread & butter, coffee & dessert

Kiddie Korner: \$4.95

Serving 5:30 - 9:00pm

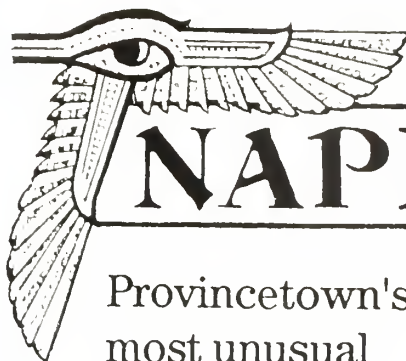
Landing Lounge Open Nightly
Blackboard Specials
Free Parking

AT THE PROVINCETOWN INN
1 Commercial Street, Provincetown
Reservations: 487-9500

Dining out?

**Check out
local restaurants
on World Wide Web!**

www.CapeCodAccess.com

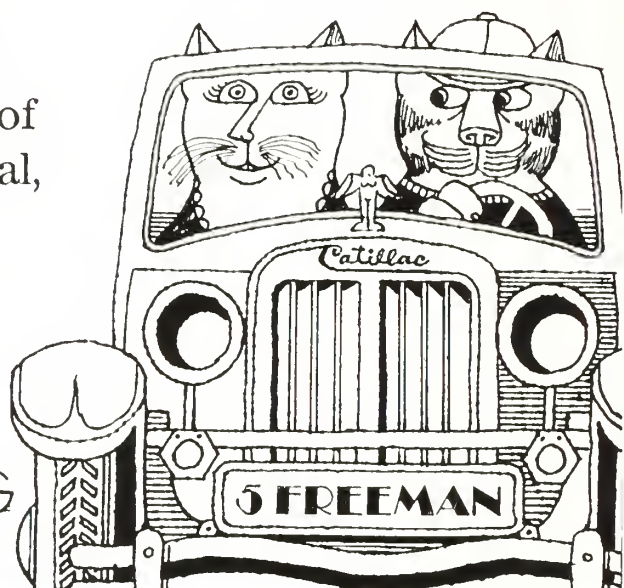


PROVINCETOWN'S MOST UNUSUAL RESTAURANT

Provincetown's
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serving the
very finest of
international,
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PROVINCETOWN, MA
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ITALIAN
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RESERVATIONS 487-0049

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& Salís**



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As always,
serving your favorite
breakfast & lunch...
Now introducing our weekly
continental dinner menu
featuring
the finest quality meats &
freshest seafoods
...and of
course create
your own pasta
dishes & gour-
met burger with our
Pasta and Hamburger
Heaven.

Full service bar

Breakfast & Lunch 8am to 3pm
Dinner Nightly 6:30pm to 10pm
For Delivery Call 487-4300

199 Commercial Street 487-9639

SPIRITUS • 487-2808 • Long Season

Serving the best pizza in town, plus Haagen Daaz ice cream. Eat out front and observe the activity in the street, indoors at booths, or, in warm weather, enjoy the outdoor garden at the back. Popular with the bar crowd, it's open late, apres bar—the scene of “the scene.”

TOWN CENTER

CAFE HEAVEN • 487-9639

A popular cafe which rivals the best New York has to offer. Breakfast is served all day, featuring fresh-squeezed juices; open for lunch and dinner, too. Ham, roast beef and turkey are freshly baked on the premises, cappuccino and espresso are the best in town, and all desserts are homemade, using plenty of seasonal fruits. “Hamburger Heaven” served nightly beginning Memorial Day Weekend through Labor Day. Display of paintings by artist John Grillo. Full service bar. Sorry, no credit cards accepted.

LORRAINE'S • 487-6074 • Long Season

Owner/chef Lorraine brings tradition and flare to New American and Mexican cuisine for a third season. Handed down from her grandmother, third generation recipes remain staples to the menu where full, hot plates are served in the intimate dining room. Everything from Duckling Taquitos to Paella Espanola are offered, as well as a variety of other creative dishes to satisfy the palate. The booths are warm and cozy and frame monthly art exhibits. The full bar serves the best fresh squeezed lime Margaritas in town. Dinner nightly from 6 p.m. Late night Tapas until midnight. No reservations. MasterCard and Visa accepted.

FRONT STREET • 487-9715 • Long Season

A romantic and elegant bistro located in the brick cellar of a Victorian mansion, Front Street has a well-earned reputation as one of Provincetown's finest restaurants. Chef/owner Donna Aliperti provides an intriguing change of menu weekly, featuring continental cuisine prepared with the finest ingredients, complemented by an extensive wine list. Menu of Italian cuisine also available. Dinner until 11, bar until 1 a.m.

EURO ISLAND GRILL • 487 2505 • Seasonal

Once a church, then a movie theater, the Euro Island Grill has a style all its own. Exuding tropical charm, the Euro dishes up a unique blend of Caribbean and Mediterranean flavors. Enjoy lunch or dinner outside on the spacious patio one floor up overlooking Commercial Street, right next to Town Hall. Serving dinner until 10:30, light fare until 2 am, with excellent live entertainment-jazz, blues and reggae groups at Club Euro throughout the season. Call for music schedule. Open May-October. A fun place, and great for people watching!

MOJO's • 487 3140 • Seasonal

Featured in NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER, *Cape Cod Travel Wise*, May/June 1997, as “Classic seafood take-out shack that stands out for its huge portions, fresh fish, and light battering and frying.” Try homemade fried potatoes (with skins on), batter-fried mushrooms, fresh seafood sandwiches and platters, homemade chili, humus salad with sprouts. Eat at outdoor tables, or stroll across to the beach and enjoy your feast watching the fishing come and go. Efficient and friendly service. Open from 11 a.m. to midnight.

Dancing Lobster



CAFE / TRATTORIA

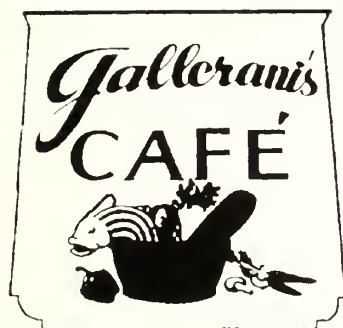
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"The best seafood in all New England"



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Dinner: 5-11pm

Upstairs Tavern: 5pm-12:30am

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Modern, Comfortable Accomodations
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Function Facilities

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Maggie Cassella
Georgia Ragsdale
Shelly Mars
Meryl Cohn
Marga Gomez

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258 Commercial St
487-2505

Reggae
Jazz
Cabaret

**CLUB
EURO**

DANCING LOBSTER • 487-0900

Now in its fourth year, the Dancing Lobster is one of Provincetown's best kept secrets. Operated by the namesake of Pepe's Wharf, Pepe Berg has taken off by himself to open this delightful restaurant, this year in new location: at the Flagship. A welcome addition to the town's culinary repertoire, and well worth a visit. Long season.

NAPI'S • 487-1145 • Open Year Round

Dubbed "Provincetown's most unusual restaurant," Napi's certainly has plenty on which to feast the eye as well as the palate. Owners Napi and Helen van Dereck have embellished their restaurant, built by Napi himself, with items from their extensive collection of Provincetown art and artifacts. The food is as unusual as the surroundings, featuring international, local and vegetarian cuisine, all prepared to the highest standards by Helen. Breakfast, lunch and dinner off-season, dinner ONLY in season. Parking.

LOBSTER POT • 487-0842 • Open all year

Owned and managed by the McNulty family, this bustling restaurant serves some of the best fresh seafood in town in a no-nonsense atmosphere where the main feature is what comes out of the kitchen. The service is friendly and efficient, so even when it's crowded, things run smoothly. Chef Tim McNulty's clam chowder won the Cape Cod Chowder Contest four years running. Try a cocktail at the "Top of the Pot," the second floor bar and outside deck with fabulous view of the harbor. Be prepared to stand in line on a busy nights, but the wait is well worth it. Just around the corner from Town Wharf, you can't miss the classic red neon lobster signs. Buy the Lobster Pot Cookbook—\$9.95.

CAFE BLASE • 487-9465 • Seasonal

The Town's most picturesque outdoor cafe, with pink and blue umbrellas, multi-colored paper lampshades gently swaying in the breeze, and colorful annuals in windowboxes abounding. The food is a touch more sophisticated than the usual with a definite European flair and this year there are new items on the menu! A perfect place to sit in the sun, people watching, sipping a cool drink, or reading the Sunday papers; you'll also have the best view of the July 4th parade. Next to the Town Library.

CAFE EDWIGE • 487-2008 • Seasonal

The most popular breakfast place in town, with good reason: sample granola, omelettes, fresh-squeezed juices, frittatas, tortillas, garden salads, pancakes, fresh-baked Danish pastries, and more. In the evenings, Cafe Edwige transforms into "Edwige at Night" presenting the chef's unique style of modern American cooking with the finest of natural foods. Brunch until 2 p.m. Upstairs at 333 Commercial Street, across from the library.

EAST END

PEPE'S • 487-0670 • Seasonal

Owned and operated by the Berg family since 1967, Pepe's continues to serve the finest gourmet seafood, including bouillabaisse, lobster, and Portuguese dishes. Pepe's romantic atmosphere, European flair and beachfront location make this a special place to visit. Enjoy brunch or lunch in the waterfront dining room or on the upstairs deck overlooking the bay. Lunch and dinner.

"Wonderful"

—ZAGAT

"One of the East's most remarkable, delightful and delicious destinations."

—DISCERNING TRAVELER



"One of the most outstanding wine lists..."

—THE WINE SPECTATOR

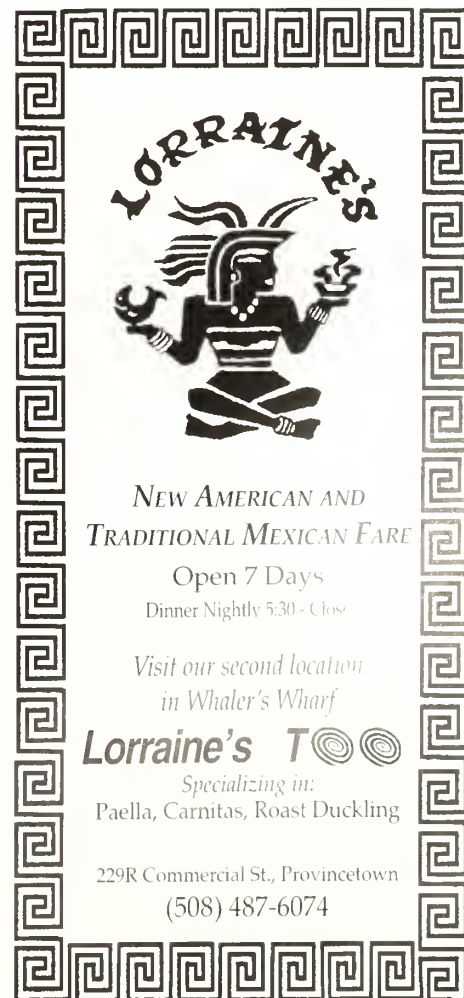
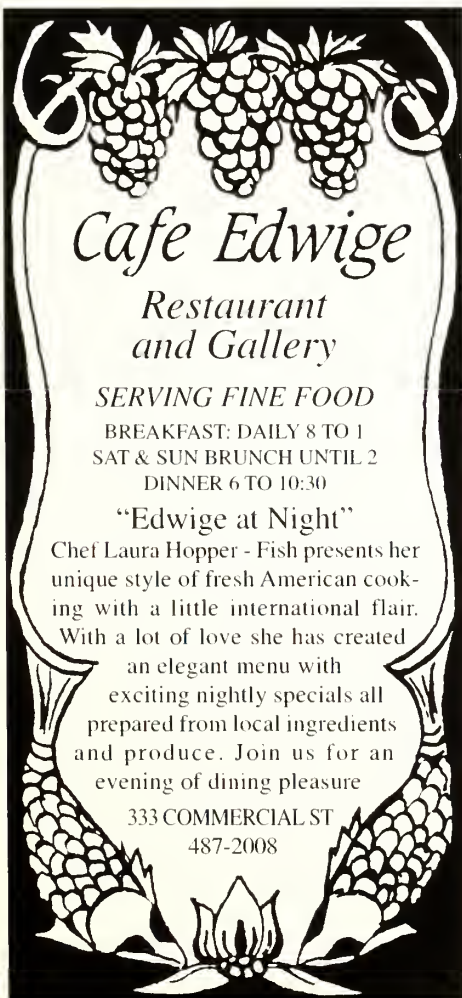


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—Boston Magazine

Front Street a restaurant

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Reservations (508) 487- 9715



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Join us and enjoy unique and innovative food, spectacular water views and sunsets. Dine inside or on our outdoor deck overlooking Cape Cod Bay.

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8:00 am - 12:00 noon (1:00 pm Sat. & Sun.)

voted "Best Breakfast Outer Cape"—CAPE COD LIFE

DINNER

5:30 - 10:00 pm

Specializing in regional Italian cuisine. Appetizers, salads, pasta dishes, wood fired brick oven pizzas and entrees. 1997 Yankee Traveler Editor Picks

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Featuring original artwork by local artists

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Route 6 • North Truro • 487-4360 • 5 minutes from Provincetown

THE COMMONS • 487-7800

This rambling property has been marvelously refurbished and revitalized in the last year. The menu features handmade gourmet pizzas from the wood burning oven, fire-roasted free-range chicken, fresh native seafood, and French-style Bistro grilled steak, as well as daily specials, including some vegetarian dishes. The emphasis is on fresh ingredients and flavorful preparations. The restaurant has a casual but sophisticated ambience with a dining room overlooking Commercial Street, as well as delightful canopied upper deck for outdoor dining in warmer weather. A bonus: fine wines by the glass, also cappuccino and espresso, and be sure to check out the tiny but friendly street-side bar. Sushi bar daily on the deck from 4pm.

THE MEWS • 487-1500 • Open all year

The beach level main dining room serves internationally influenced American fusion cuisine in a light, airy elegant atmosphere. The Cafe, on the second floor, overlooks the harbor and offers a more casual menu of pizzas, pastas, burgers, chicken, fish, chops, etc. Having received rave food and service reviews from national and local publications over the years, The Mews, once again, has received awards from Cape Cod Life magazine for Best Waterfront and Best Romantic restaurant. Conveniently located in Provincetown's renowned gallery district, The Mews Restaurant and Cafe are perfect places to visit before or after browsing through the galleries.

CIRO'S • 487-0049 • Open all year.

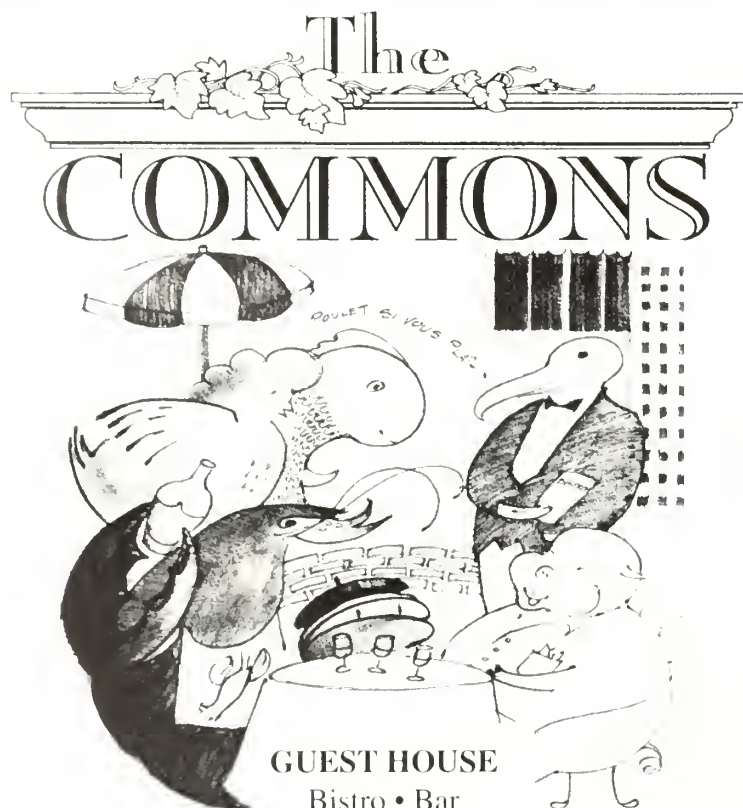
Ciro's is Provincetown's best known restaurant, a romantic wine cellar serving an extensive menu of gourmet Northern Italian specialties. Enjoy dinner amid the worn flagstones and straw Chianti bottles downstairs, or join the convivial crowd for cocktails upstairs in the intimate lounge, accompanied by operatic arias. Owned and operated by the Cozzi family since the early '50s, the restaurant is now managed by Ciro's daughter Theo. Reservations are essential in season and weekends off-season; you'll find it down the alley at Kiley Court in the East End gallery district. Look for Ciro's cookbook in stores this summer.

PUCCI'S • 487-1964 • Seasonal

A delightful little cafe right on the beach in the East End serving a wide variety of snack appetizers, and main meals throughout the day until 12:30 a.m. The specialty is Pucci's Buffalo chicken wings, better than any other; also available are fresh seafood, char-broiled burgers, Mexican specialties, salads, and sandwiches. The atmosphere is friendly, casual and relaxed and prices are moderate. Drop by any time for wings and a beer, or a cocktail and a plate of appetizers. The bar is a lively meeting place for East-Enders.

MICHAEL SHAY'S • 487-3368

Shay's serves breakfast, lunch and dinner in a cozy, traditional New England atmosphere. Fresh seafood and char-broiled prime meats are a specialty, accompanied by selections from an excellent salad bar. Known for quality food at moderate prices. The early dinner specials—served 5-7 p.m.—are an excellent value. Open 8 a.m.-10 p.m. Parking. Open year round.



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ART - CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST
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ART - FULL COFFEE BAR
ART - MEET NEW FRIENDS!

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Chewy marshmallow nougat,
gooey caramel swirl and fudge fish
all swimming in milk chocolate ice cream.

For People

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VERMONT'S FINEST • ICE CREAM & FROZEN YOGURT™

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Michael Shay's

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Serving 3 meals a day, 7 days a week!

Early Bird Specials: \$11.95

4-7p.m. / Sunday: Noon-7p.m.

- Baked Stuffed Shrimp with Crabmeat Stuffing
- Baked Stuffed Sole topped with Lobster Newburg
- Roast Prime Rib with Yorkshire Pudding
- Marinated Charbroiled London Broil
- Vegetarian Lasagna

Served with choice of rice or baked stuffed potato, selections from our huge homemade salad, and bread

Friday Nights

All-you-can-eat Fish or Clam Fry: \$7.95

Sunday Turkey Dinner: \$7.95

Starting at Noon

Breakfast Specials from \$1.95

Lunch Specials from \$3.95

350 BRADFORD STREET, PROVINCETOWN • 487-3368

IN THE FAR EAST END
PLENTY OF FREE PARKING

TRURO

ADRIAN'S • 487-4360 • Seasonal

Your hosts: Adrian and Annette. Situated on a bluff overlooking Provincetown Harbor, Adrian's serves fabulous breakfasts and dinners with the freshest ingredients on an outdoor deck or in airy dining room. Authentic pasta dishes and gourmet pizzas are prepared in a wood-fired brick oven.

THE BLACKSMITH SHOP • 349-6554

Exit Pamet Road, Truro Center

The Blacksmith Shop brings fifty years of experience to fine dining in the center of Truro. Serving eclectic breakfasts and a full dinner menu featuring free-range chicken, local seafood and original pasta dishes. The Blacksmith Shop is also a perfect destination for espresso and cappuccino. Nightly specials and an extensive wine list. Open year round.

WELLFLEET

AESOP'S TABLES • 349-6450 • Seasonal

Owner: Bryan Dunne. Originally, an early 19th Century Greek Revival home, Aesop's Table boasts six dining rooms and a Tavern on the Terrace, serving lunch and dinner daily. The Upstairs Bar also serves a full dinner menu in a congenial ambience created by novel seating on Victorian sofas and low cocktail tables. The menu reflects the freshest local ingredients and New American cuisine.

CAPTAIN HIGGINS • 349-6027 • Seasonal

On the town pier right next to the Wellfleet Harbor Actors' Theater, theatergoers can enjoy dinner here before the show or a cocktail afterwards. Featuring a wide selection of fresh seafood, raw bar, and children's menu, Captain Higgins offer good food at reasonable prices. Efficient service, casual atmosphere, great location overlooking the Harbor, and deck for outdoor dining.

PAINTER'S • 349-3003 • Seasonal

Once the old Wellfleet Oyster House, now open its second season as Painter's, managed by Kate Painter, daughter of fiction writer Pamela Painter. Sure to be a fun place to visit in Wellfleet, Painter's offers "simple food in a funky place," though you might consider "simple" a touch modest when you peruse the tempting menu which seems to rove the world for ideas. To round off the meal, you can order the ultimate dessert: a pint of Ben & Jerry's with a scoop. Dinner is served from 5-11p.m. and the upstairs tavern's open until past midnight. You'll find Painter's on Main Street just off Route 6.



CATÉ BLASÉ

Elizabeth Taylor drank a Tamarindo here in 1975



...still on the menu.

PROVINCETOWN'S OUTDOOR CAFE
328 COMMERCIAL ST.

1997 PROVINCETOWN GALLERY GUIDE

1.

CLIBBON GALLERY

120 Commercial Street 487-3563

Daily 10am to 5pm, Fri and Sat 7pm to 9pm

Directors: Robert Clibbon and Melyssa Bearse

A summer gallery specializing in color etchings of marine and animal life, romantic themes and dune landscapes. Robert Clibbon and Melyssa Bearse, husband and wife, sell their work directly to the public. Our Twentieth Season, meet the artist!

2.

WOHLFARTH GALLERIES

234 Commercial Street 487-6569

Daily May through October.

Director: Lavina Wohlfarth

Representing the students of the Cape Cod School of Art—past and present, in the tradition of Charles Hawthorne and Henry Hensche. Special exhibitions of works by Lois Griffel, Robert Longley, William Papaleo, Margaret McWethy, Cedric and Joannette Egehl and John DiMestico. Also the home of W. Photography, Cape Cod's only gallery exclusive to photography.

3.

JULIE HELLER GALLERY

2 Gosnold Street 487-2169

Across from Adams Pharm. On the beach parking

Daily 11am 11pm & by appointment.

Director: Julie Heller

A gallery dedicated to the artists that established Provincetown: Avery, Bailey*, Chaffee, W.M. Chase, Clymer*, de Groot*, Embury*, Freedman*, Hawthorne, Hensche, Hofmann, Knaths, Lazzell, L'Engle*, Marantz, Moffett, Nordfeldt, Phillips*, Walkowitz, Weinrich, Zorach and others. New works by Brooks, Burnell, Combs, Evans, Gordon, Reddick, Schneider, Sidor, Summit and Webb. * Estate representation.

4.

DAVIS STUDIO GALLERY

284a Commercial Street 487-1135

Hours: Thur-Fri-Sat Mon 1pm to 4pm-8pm to 11pm (except good sailing days) Also by appointment

Director: Kaolin Davis

Focus on AL's ceramic sculpture and Kaolin's functional wares. Come and see the outdoor sculpture garden.

5.

PASSIONS GALLERY

336 Commercial Street #2 (Pilgrim House Complex) 487-5740

Daily 11am to 11pm Director: Esther Lastique

"Art To Fall In Love With." Passions is an exclusively figurative collection specializing in a variety of mediums. Artists include: Colette Hebert, Paula Nazquez, Eric Klum, Bernard Hoyes and Robert Bliss.

6.

KENNEDY GALLERY

353 Commercial Street 487-3896

Daily 10am to 11pm and by appointment

Director: Frederick H. Schulenburg

A collection of original watercolors, oil paintings and prints by Robert E. Kennedy and Michele Richard Kennedy. Also featuring special exhibitions by other artists throughout the season.

7.

PETER COES STUDIO GALLERY

25 Pearl Street 487-1405

Daily 11am to 3pm pleased to make appointments

Directors: Peter and Linda Coes

An intimate gallery where you can meet the artist, view his unique narrative paintings and visit the studio where they are created. These precise and richly detailed paintings use the imagery of childhood, New England and nature, to evoke a reality that returns as a memory.

Peter Coes paintings are held in museum, corporate and private collections throughout the United States and Europe.

8.

HUDSON D. WALKER GALLERY

Fine Arts Work Center, 24 Pearl Street

508-487-9960

Evenings, weekends and by appointment

Work by Fine Arts Work Center Fellows Past and Present, and Summer Program Faculty: Richard Baker, Paul Bowen, Michael Byron, Bernard Cheit, Eckard Etzold, Gregory Gillespie, Darcy Hammer, Hilary Harp, Barkley L. Hendricks, Nona Hershey, Jenny Humphreys, Sidney Hurwitz, Blaney Kern, Peik Larson, James Lechay, Stephen Linksvayer, Michael Mazur, Andrew Mockler, Portia Munson, Jim Peters, Marjorie Portnow, Sarah Rapson, Madeline Silber, Selma Treiff, Gelsy Verna, Michelle Weinberg, Karen Yamachi, Bert Yarbrough, Lisa Yuskavage.

9.

CAPE COD SCHOOL OF ART

48 Pearl Street 487-0101

Summer '97 Schedule-call, write or stop by

Director: Lois Griffel

An art school in its 97th year—dedicated to the teaching philosophy of Charles Hawthorne and his rich legacy of American Impressionism.

10.

TRIBAL OFFERINGS GALLERY

394 Commercial Street 487-4857

Open daily—year round

Director: Robert Graham-Munn

Exclusively American Indian Art: limited editions, originals, fine contemporary, estate and old pawn American Indian jewelry, pottery and sculpture.

11.

ZOLTAN GLUCK ART GALLERY

398 Commercial Street 487-1529

Daily 11am to 11pm Celebrating our 30th season.

Director: Zoltan Gluck

Featuring an eclectic collection of local and international artists: E.S. Oppenheim, Dean Folsom, Zoltan Gluck, Raphael Soyer, Adolph Sebring, H. Claude Pissarro, Tarkay, Emil Lindenfeld, Miles Davis, Emil Gerald, Delarue, Tibor David, Bouysson, Dubord, Porcel, Morro, and M. Henry.

12.

FOWLER GALLERY

423 Commercial Street 487-3388 Daily 11am to 11pm in season

Director: Stephen Smith

Meet the artist at a gallery featuring figurative, landscape, and abstract painting and drawing by one of the Cape's most versatile artists. Guest artists and special exhibitions throughout the season.

13.

EVA DE NAGY ART GALLERY

427 Commercial Street 487-9669

Daily 10am to 2pm; 7pm to 10pm

Off season by appointment

Director: Eva De Nagy

Established 1960 Paintings, pastels and drawings by Eva De Nagy; 17th century Philippine Santos; ivory and semi-precious stone carvings; bronzes from Nepal; African and Asiatic art; jewelry designed by Eva de Nagy. Also paintings by Erno De Nagy, 1881-1952, American-Hungarian artist.

14.

RICE/POLAK GALLERY

430 Commercial Street 487-1052 Tel/Fax

Daily 11am to 11pm

Directors: Marla Rice and Richard Polak

Provincetown's most comprehensive collection of contemporary art. The gallery's collection includes paintings, pastels, assemblages, photography and sculpture. Special exhibitions by artists with international reputations include: Antonova, Calkins, Crocker, Hames, Howes-Stevens, Harvey, Haussman, Jaffe, Keyton, Lake, Lebow, Levesque, Paxton, Prifti, Rosenthal, Seghi, Selman, Silver, Skollar, Stevens, Touby, Triebert, Tyler, Winfield and others. Please call for an exhibition schedule.

15.

BANG STREET GALLERY

432 Commercial Street 487-0743

Director: Gillian Drake

Fine Contemporary Art: Ramon Alcolea, David Armstrong, John Calhoun, Sasha Chavchavadze, Susanna Coffey, Karen Gunderson, Susan Lowe, Townie New, Sarah Oppenheimer, Sal Randolph, Marian Roth, Caroline Thomson, Peter Thomson, Vicky Tomayko.

16.

HARVEY DODD GALLERY

437 Commercial Street 487-3329

Daily 11am to 11pm Director: Harvey Dodd

A gallery of Dodd's expressive art work in varied media, subject matter and approach. The 37th season.

17.

PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM

460 Commercial Street 487-1750

Daily in July and August 12n to 5pm; 8pm to 10pm

Director: Robyn Watson

One of the foremost art museums in the country with a permanent collection of regional art from the past 80 years. Organized in 1914. Special exhibitions, juried shows, concerts, slide shows and other events throughout the year. Call for times.

18.

PROVINCETOWN GROUP GALLERY

465 Commercial Street 487-8841 Fax 487-5573

Daily 11am to 11pm in season

Director: Laura Shabbott Staff: Paul Gunbleton, Emma Ross Sponsor: Bershad Design Associates, Boston

An oceanside gallery with a breathtaking view, representing 22 contemporary artists.

19.

LONG POINT GALLERY

492 Commercial Street 487-1795

Daily 11am to 3pm; 8pm to 11pm

or by appointment

Director: Rosalind Pace

20th season featuring works by: Robert Beauchamp, Varujan Boghosian, Paul Bowen, Fritz Bulman, Carmen Cicero, Gilbert Franklin, Sideo Frombolotti, Edward Giobbi, Dimitri Hadzi, Bud Hopkins, Leo Manso, Michael Mazur, Robert Motherwell, Renate Ponsold, Paul Resika, Judith Rothschild, Sidney Simon, Nora Speyer, Tony Vevers.

20.

RISEING TIDE GALLERY

494 Commercial Street 487-4037

Daily 11am to 5pm; 7pm to 10pm

Openings Sundays 6pm to 8pm

Featuring the following contemporary artists from Provincetown, Boston, Maine and New York: Donald Beal, Rachel Brown, Robert Dutoit, Anthony Fisher, Fred Garbers, Noa Hall, Elspeth Halvorsen, Sidney Hurwitz, Peter Macara, Joan McD. Miller, Martin Mugar, Vita Petersen, Jack Phillips, Michael Rogovsky, David Shamberg, Ellen Sinclair and Peter Watts. Works include oils, watercolors, prints and box constructions. Continuously changing exhibitions.

21.

BERTA WALKER GALLERY (east)

208 Bradford (at Howland) 487-6411

Daily 11am to 4pm and 8pm to 10pm

Representing Provincetown affiliated artists—past-present-future. One person exhibitions include: Peppone, Musselman, Treiff, DiMartini, Kearney, Harding, Whorf, Dunigan, Dickinson, Peters. Also showing Resika, Knaths, Lazzell, Chaffee, Moffett, Weinrich and others.

WALKER'S WONDERS

153 Commercial Street (at Atlantic) 487-8794

Daily 11am to 4pm-7pm to 10pm

A gallery of Folk and Functional Art. One person exhibitions include: Wirhum, Walk, Henry, Shrand, Basile, Hogen and others.

22.

DNA: DEFINITIVE NEW ART GALLERY

288 Bradford Street 487-7700

Director: Jennifer Liese Owner: Nick Lawrence

Hours: Mon-Thur 12pm to 5pm; 12pm to 8pm

July-August: Fri-Sun 12pm to 8pm,

or by appointment

A dynamic contemporary art gallery featuring work in a variety of media including: painting, sculpture, installation, video, readings and performance. Gallery artists: Bob Bailey, Thaddeus Beal, Mary Behrens, The Benson Brothers, Jay Critchley, Breon Dunigan, Karen Finley, Hiroyuki Hamada, Darcy Hammer, Sharon Horvath, Jenny Humphreys, Peter Hutchinson, David Johnson, Habib Kheradary, Michael Landis, Shelley Loheed, Susan Lyman, Conrad Malicoat, David Mamio, Joel Meyerowitz, Karen Miller, Christopher Minot, Traven Pelletier, Craig Pleasants, Anna Poor, Daniel Ranalli, Francine Randolph, Jo Sandman, Sterck and Roza, David VanVactor, Digby Veevers-Carter, Tahitha Vevers.

THE
PROVINCETOWN
GALLERY GUILD
P.O. BOX 1024
PROVINCETOWN
MA 02657

SHOPPING GUIDE

CENTURY

205 Commercial Street • 487-2332

Personal accessories and accessories for the home with an emphasis on lighting and modern design.

CITY ZOO/DOWN ISLAND

371 Commercial Street at Pepe's Wharf
487-2032

This retail store and gallery represents one of the largest collections of Haitian metal sculpture in the U.S. as well as an eclectic collection of handcrafted one-of-a-kinds from the U.S. and around the world.

D. FLAX

214A Commercial Street • 487-4256

Original t-shirt and sweatshirt designs from Donna Flax.

EXUMA

283 Commercial Street • 487-2746

Exuma has been a trusted jeweler since 1972 and meets the needs of a diverse clientele from around the world. Exuma, retailer and manufacturer of fine jewelry, offers a wide selection of classic and modern ring design in 14k gold, 18k gold, and platinum. Custom gemstone rings, estate jewelry, wedding bands. Expert appraisals and repairs yearround. See our color ad on page 16.

FAR SIDE OF THE WIND

389 Commercial Street • 487-3963

Crystal, jewelry, arts and crafts, tapes, books, spiritual readings, wind chimes, Native American artifacts.

FRENCHWARE

283 Commercial Street • 487-7865

Frenchware is a new, very small boutique specializing in the finest French dry goods. Featuring classic Breton blue and white striped 100% sailor's jerseys, rare Ballets Russes t-shirts and other Gallic gifts, books, cards and art. From Tintin to the Louvre, Frenchware can satisfy the most demanding Francophile. See our ad in the Lodging Guide.

GLOBAL GIFTS

249 Commercial Street • 487-3524

In the center of town, specializing in traditional items from China, India and Nepal. Decorative accessories, jewelry, and clothing. Open year-round.

HALCYON

371 Commercial Street • 487-9415

A gallery of art-to-wear. Specializing in hand-made clothing and jewelry by American artists. Also featuring a discriminating line of hand-blown glass and decorative items.

KIDSTUFF

381 Commercial Street • 487-0714

LITTLE BITS

214 Commercial Street • 487-3860

Kid's clothing stores aimed at comfort, durability and fun designs. You'll find the ever-popular Flapdoodle line as well as Rhino Rumba, Zutano, Cow and Lizard, Flaphappy, Wes and Willy and other great designs to fit infants to size 12.

KISMET

291 Commercial Street • 487-5738

Specializing in contemporary home accessories in steel, glass, and wood. Our studios and artisans provide an arresting variety of gift possibilities. Exquisite stone fountains, aromatherapy candles, creative camp surprises, and shopping magic. Open April through January. Accepting phone orders yearround.

MAD AS A HATTER

360 Commercial Street • 487-4063

Provincetown's spot for unique headware for all seasons. Peter Edmonds makes his own women's creations and boutique items. He will also take custom orders.

MARINE SPECIALTIES

235 Commercial Street • 487-1730

Provincetown's original compendium, from collectibles to clothing, from seashells to authentic army surplus. Marine Specialties is a highlight of Commercial Street shopping.

MERCHANT'S HALL

359 Commercial St., Mews Courtyard • 487-6171

This new retail center consists of 11 shops, galleries, and pushcarts stretching from a cobblestone fountain courtyard to a private pier on the harbor. Merchants include: La Spiaggia, Little Gorgeous Things, Claddagh Connection, Atlantis, Daniel Cleary Clothing, Wind and Water, Magic Rice, Adina, Yvette's Cassettes and Didi's CDs.

MODA FINA

349 Commercial Street • 487-MODA

Moda Fina, a fine clothing and shoe store, features contemporary new designers from New York and California. Specializing in unique fashions and natural fabrics such as washable linens, silks, and rayons. In addition, Moda Fina offers gift items from around the world. Open mostly year round.

NORTHERN LIGHTS LEATHER

361 Commercial Street • 487-9376

Sensational leathers for men and women. Beautiful jackets, handbags, luggage, belts, and accessories including a complete line of Euro-comfort footwear. Since 1974. Open yearround.

PEARSON STAINED GLASS STUDIO

241 Commercial Street • 487-2851

Handcrafted stained glass windows and objets d'art by Chris Pearson. Special orders are also available.

PISCES

207 Commercial Street • 487-3417

The Pisces gallery/shop specializes in contemporary American crafts, showing the work of more than one hundred artists from all regions of the country. What makes Pisces unique is its focus; all work shown is fish imagery. Sophisticated in style, the pieces represent a wide range of media and techniques.

PTOWN BIKES

42 Bradford Street • 487-8735

306 Commercial Street • 487-6718

The people at Ptown Bikes are committed to fitting you to the appropriate bike for your size and riding needs. Featuring Mongoose and Trek bikes for off-road, touring, and just getting around town. A real community business featuring personalized service and repairs.

RUBY'S

167 Commercial Street • 487-9522

One of Provincetown's finest jewelers. Specializing in commitment rings and spectacular jewelry for all occasions. Visit Ruby's in Provincetown, and let their experienced staff help you find a treasure to wear.

SHOP THERAPY

346 Commercial Street • 487-9387, 487-9392

Provincetown's original alternative lifestyle emporium. Featuring a complete line of clove and natural cigarettes, tobacco, tobacco papers, tobacco pipes and accessories. Quality ethnic clothing, sterling jewelry, tie dye, one-of-a-kind gifts and handcrafts, leather goods, rock'n roll, posters, patches, incense, oils, beads, bells, candles, adult novelties and toys and more. See our color ad on page 16.

SILK & FEATHERS

377 Commercial Street • 487-2057

ONE SPORT

383 Commercial Street • 487-2312

The clothes speak for themselves. Dressing you from head to toe, including lingerie, Silk and Feathers has an interesting collection featuring Vivienne Tam, Mary DeAngelis, Angelheart, Lat Nailor and C.P. Shades. Also visit One Sport, our men's store next door for fashion forward comfort.

TURNING POINT

379 Commercial Street • 487-0642

A relaxing atmosphere in which to shop, with friendly, courteous salespeople. Featuring comfortable coordinated pieces which are timeless vs. trendy, Turning Point is the exclusive purveyors of such lines as Eileen Fisher, Deborah Parker, Lillian Ball, Vaubel and Julie Howison among others. We invite browsers, and are open yearround.

C.P. THOMAS & CO./UTILITARIAN OUTFITTERS

331 Commercial Street • 487-9040

Brand name men's and women's denim and khakis at discount prices. Distressed jeans, sneakers, belts, sweatshirts, t-shirts, white bucks, overalls, shortalls, pajamas, bathing suits, outerwear, sweaters and socks. Clothing for kids and infants too.

UTILITIES

393 Commercial Street • 487-6800

Winner of Cape Cod Life's Reader's Poll "Best Shop for the Home", featured in Boston Magazine, The Boston Globe, Bon Appetit and Cook's Illustrated. Frommer's 1997 Guide to Cape Cod lists Utilities as a "breath of fresh contemporary design featuring sleek and colorful essentials." Everything from the smallest gadget to the most beautiful lines of dinnerware and cookware.

WA

184 Commercial Street • 487-6355 fax 487-6844

"Wa," translated from the Japanese, means harmony. In the store, the visitor will find a harmonious blend of treasures from many cultures and ancient traditions; items for a meditative tea ceremony, incense, music, and unique handmade things from around the world as well as local and regional artists. Owner Tom Rogers wishes for visitors to achieve a state of Wa, to experience the sensory moment, in the present. Hear waters of fountains and be appeased by the narrow color palette of neutrals, cream, black, ivory, and celadon. From the moment you step off busy Commercial Street, you will enjoy a truly calming retail experience.

WEST END ANTIQUES

146 Commercial Street • 487-6723

West End Antiques, at the corner of Commercial and Conant streets, is a small antique store whose emphasis is on quality and variety. Items include art pottery, especially Roseville and Rookwood, china, including Wedgwood, Lenox and Belleek, depression glass, children's books, toys and games, advertising and ephemera. Provincetown souvenir pieces from the turn-of-the-century through the 1930's are a specialty.

ZZAZZ

296 Commercial Street • 487-4644

The art of dressing for men and women. Contemporary clothing, form-fitting to free-flowing in silk, linen, cotton and new fabrics such as tencel and bemberg. Featuring M.S. Girbaud, Z., Cavaricci, Tod Oldham, Barbara Lesser, L. Bates, Citron and many more.

PAUL RESIKA



Bright Night

1996 Oil on Canvas 38"x50"

PIER PAINTINGS

AUGUST 1997

PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM

460 Commercial Street Provincetown MA 02657 Tel. 508-487-1750 Fax 508-487-4372